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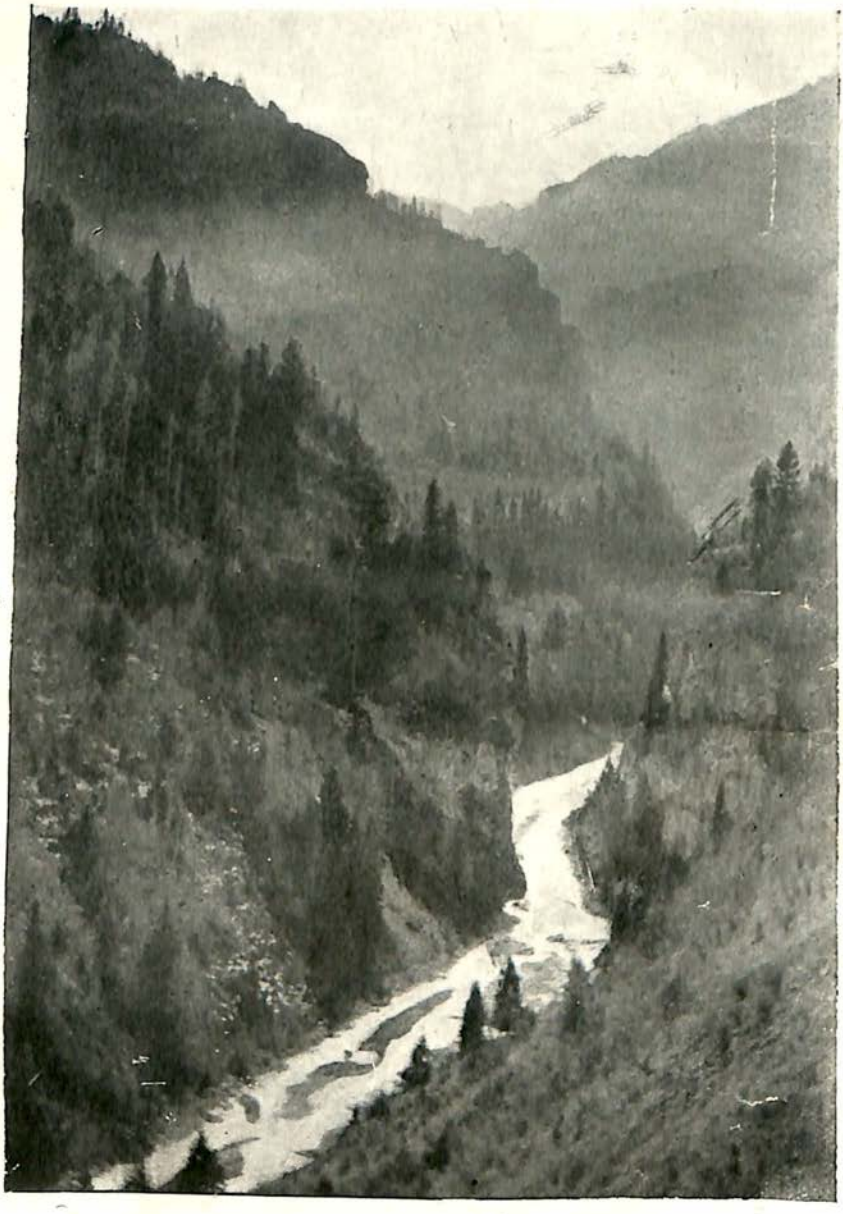


THE TIBETAN GORGES ABOVE ARDJERI

ON THE EAVES OF THE WORLD

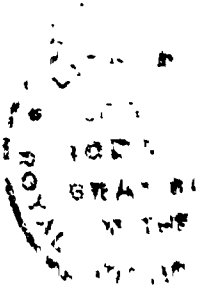
BY

REGINALD FARRER

56811
ac.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME II



WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

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ON THE EAVES OF THE WORLD

CHAPTER XIII

THE CONQUEST OF THUNDERCROWN

WELL has the Crown of Thunders earned its name. As the solitary and supreme height of the Ridge, ruling the whole eastward countryside in undisputed majesty, Thundercrown inevitably accumulates all the clouds and storms of the district, besides brewing a daily one of its own. Throughout May, June, and July almost every day at Siku begins in cloudless radiance, with the summit of the mountain candid and serene; and every day, towards three in the afternoon, white clouds begin to breed about its shoulders, and darken and multiply, and find vent between four and five in violent storms of thunder, hail, and rain that sometimes sweep the whole valley in their course, and sometimes exhaust their passion in their cradle, and pass away in light wracks and rainbows from the glistering, smiling pinnacles in the sunlight so far overhead. But in October the mountain often has a long fit of the sullens, and retires into invisibility for a fortnight or more behind an unvarying veil of leaden murk, obliterating all suspicion of great heights above Siku; and emerges only in its first glory of snow, dazzling in splendour after the naked bareness of the summer. But this is only a promise, and soon fades in the heat of early November, before at last the real winter settles down upon the

Alps in a deep vesture of ice and snow, never again to be broken till the feet of June ascend the heights next year.

It was on the 20th of June, indeed, that after preliminary flying visits of exploration, we at last brought off our camping expedition on to Thundercrown. The way lies out through the western gate of Siku, and along the stony pathway to Tibet for about a mile, till you diverge round one of the barren loess downs, and up into the long valley behind it, by which the loess shelf above is gradually attained at its head. Blazing and stony is the ascent, and it is almost shocking to see the snowy glacial Androsace so happy here in wide mats and masses over the most barren and burning banks and little cliffs, though long since passed out of flower, and now beginning even to shed its seed. A little later, and there will be wiry tiny Asters a-twinkle on these caked fells, and the scarlet turbans of the Slender-leaved Lily. At present there are already the long ferny, green sprays and the sulphur Allamandas all along them of the Variable Incarvillea* that has always hitherto been such a disappointment in our cool damp climate, but riots beautifully on all the hot bare downs of the Chinese border away up into the bleak region of the Da Tung Alps, where, on the burning hills round the abbey of the Halls of Heaven, it grows as profuse as in the acropolis walls of Siku, and blossoms equally persistently from May to November.

Otherwise the ascent of that grilling fold of the downs has no special interest, and is, indeed, a desolating, arid piece of work, up over glaciers of mud and minerals and slag-dump dirtiness, or coiling in a shingle-track between accumulated walls of blocks that refract the already sufficient heat. You may take either of two

* I. species, near *I. variabilis* .

ways: at once ascend the spur on the farther side of the valley from Siku by a sharp and very toilsome tortuous climb almost to the topmost level of the loess, whence, after passing a small village on the last prominence of the hill (where the weeping Buddleia is still in lavish waterfalls of purple beauty), you gently traverse all along the breast of the fell until you come at length to the final little pull that lands you at the village at the valley's head ensconced on the loess shelf immediately at the feet of Thundercrown; or else you may take the easier way right up the depth of the valley till you get to its head, passing other little hamlets on the way, and the snuggest of possible neat farms snuggled among greenery in denes so sudden and unexpected as to give them perfect concealment until you are actually upon them, and even then, if a malefactor, would be baffled by the uniform unbroken front of their high mud walls, which turns them almost into the impregnable big boxes that are the fashion in Tibet, so close at hand that its defensive fashions have penetrated thus far into China. Thence you begin mounting through more villages up a track stonier and more difficult than ever. It was here, at a turn in the path, that, in the strip of garden under a cottage wall, I saw the first of the two specimens that were all I ever came on of a regalish-leaved lily, so enormous and magnificent in promise that I suspect it of being that obscure and wrongly named problem, *L.* "*Brownii*" *kansuense*, which is certainly not *L. Brownii*, and almost equally certainly really not "kansuense," being, in both these instances at least, a treasure of cottage gardens, of which there was no trace anywhere to be seen or heard of in the neighbourhood as a wild plant.

Now, crossing the willowed glen at the top of the valley,

the final climb begins towards the upper levels, and the village of Half-way Mountain peering down upon you from its ledges high above. Steeply the difficult cobbled way ascends, past a charming little temple tucked into the side of the down amid immemorial grey boles of Celtis, among whose filmy green shades springs an undergrowth of a small and delicate tree-oak, with buzzly cups to the acorns, and narrow dainty foliage like a willow's, notched at the edges. After that grateful interval of coolness in the shady chaos of gigantic boulders in which the temple is lodged the climb resumes its severity, and preserves it unrelaxing till you reach your destination. Half-way Mountain is Ban S'an, and wrongly named at that, because it isn't, or anything like it. I always, having failed to get the right pronunciation in time, thought of the pleasant little place as Barley Bee. And a pleasant little place it is, indeed—a collection of neat and comfortable courtyarded cottages huddled on a narrow waist of the loess shelf, from which straight up behind go soaring and shooting the grassy, scrub-clad flanks and skirts of Thundercrown towards the vast coppiced pinnacles and naked precipices that are all you can see of the actual mountain from here, so close beneath it; and in themselves look formidable mountains enough in all conscience, yet nothing but insignificant buttresses of the mass above.

In June Barley Bee has yet a further attraction, for all its hedges are filled with a gigantic rambler rose, which casts abroad twelve-foot slender sprays (beset with rare but very vigorous and ferocious thorns) which in their second season are bowed into arches by the weight, all along their length, of huge loose bunches of snow-white blossom unfolding from buds of nankeen yellow; and carrying on their glory far into the early

winter in showers of round berries, finer than the finest mountain ash, that ripen of a rich orange and develop to soft crimson-scarlet with a delicate, faint bloom. But this is not its chief merit when it submerges Barley Bee in a surf of snow, for now the scent is so keen and entrancing that all the air quivers with the intoxicating deliciousness of it for half a mile round the village in every direction, and the toils of the climb ended sweetly indeed, as I lay out upon the flat roof through the soft summer dusk and dark, lapped in waves of that warm fragrance, staring up to where the dim bulk of the mountain overhead again and again leapt into a vivider darkness, with the wide flares of sheet-lightning flickering out behind; while downstairs Purdom furiously hectored with the exorbitant pretensions of to-morrow's carriers.

These good people took a fear and fled, sharing all the views on mountain-climbing expressed by prudent persons in "Excelsior." However, in the morning they had returned again, and all was well; duly the bales and bedding were apportioned, and the procession started. The way, for the first portion of the long initial slope, was quite clear to sight even from Barley Bee. A woodcutters' and shepherds' track can be seen zigzagging upwards at least as far as a big boulder lodged on the hillside, above which, for the rest of that acclivity, means will no doubt be found. At first one crosses the narrow level strip behind the villages, between hedgerows luxuriant with the Snowdrift Rose, who tries to tear your cheeks with the hooked thorns of her first season's shoots as you ride in reach of their slender, far-grappling tentacles.

At this point that infelicitous American poem was again brought to mind by labourers in the fields, who disconcertingly tried to dissuade us from attempting

the awful fastnesses above, where the dread spirits have their haunt beside the dark unfathomable lake of the summit, deep among grim crags, whence thunderbolts are forged and launched. However, we persisted, despite these cries of warning, and soon found ourselves breasting the hot and stony climb that leads up to the foot of the ascent. Very soon after this you come into the region of coarse hot grass, as on the slope behind the Pink Temple. An azure-blue Eritrichium thing (how different in its coarse stature from the King of the Alps!) disputes the tangle with Epipactis, weird and dingy, and with the first scrub in blossom of the Davurian Potentilla, which all up the northern parts of Asia is as prevailing a growth of the upper moorlands as the lings and heathers of England and Scotland—a tough, wiry shrub in every size, from four inches to four feet in height, becoming a mounded mass in summer, whatever its size, of round flowers in every shade, from the snowy purity of what is called *P. Veitchii* to the clear gold of our own *P. fruticosa*, till at last one comes to wonder how many species in reality do lie concealed beneath these three sonorous names. For in these colour variations there seems no rule, nor any certainty yet as to whether some of them do not owe their origin to interbreeding of two different tones. I can only say that in general white seems the rule in the lower extensions of the plant, and gold at the higher; but to this rule there are exceptions, and it does not deserve to be built on. In any case, the lower scrub-slopes and hot rocks at the beginning of the ascent to Thundercrown glitter pleasantly with bending sprays of its noble white little single roses, which beguile the torrid climb, winding over a stiff neck, and then up and up very steeply in an unsuspected fold of the fell till it finds

itself on the approach to the Big Stone, still far above, which now reveals itself as a block the size of a young cathedral.

At Big Stone you begin to enter the zone of interesting things, being about on a level with the gully on the hill above the Pink Temple, now clearly visible just opposite over a fearful intervening depth of wooded ravine. Accordingly, here we greet again the Fairy Bell hovering from the cliff in which the Rock-nymph also smiles, and the crumpled crimson faces of Incarvillea. These continue with you still a little way on your ascent, which now continues yet more steeply, and only possible afoot, up short, sharp zigzags of the grassy flank, amid undercrops of small cliffs, with *P.* "*lichiangensis*" hanging from their rims under the brushwood; and passes tumbles of mossed and overgrown boulders where magnificent bushy-tailed wolves have their lair. A red-berried ground elder like *S. racemosa* forms drifts of low jungle amid the stones, and is now all a flat creamy foam of its wide umbels; and Rodgersia's tiered plumes stand up, though not so nobly as in the cool damp recesses of the Gorges. By degrees the climb unfolds its full height. It had looked so short and little from Barley Bee against the enormous scale of the mass in which it forms so inconspicuous a part. But now it threatens an hour or more of solid hard work from the Big Stone, under a towering shoulder of shelving precipice plumy all along its countless ledges with the little bamboo, to where, towards its upper limit, the Narcissus Anemone begins to take charge of the cliffs once more, sure sign that we are advancing towards the true alpine zone. Up and up we toil; the azure fumitory peers and glints in the low scrub, and the butterfly Iris in opener places of the turfy fell-side develops a quite

unusual amplitude of development, with more than a dozen of its pardaline blossoms fluttering gracefully off from the central tussock of finest grass.

The end of this first stage brings you to a little col at the top of the long slope, from which a wooded pinnacle stands off from the huge spur-rib of precipices descending from Thundercrown. There is alpine coppice here, of the big white Rhododendron glittering in dumpy masses up the cool slopes of the peak, and the straggly purply one here at its top limit rather more neat and refined in habit than usual. And here we may rest for a moment, amid the mossy boulders crested with golden Ground Daphne, and rimmed with flaunting snowy flowers of the Narcissus Anemone. The way is still clear before us. Now there is an "easy"—a very gentle ascent round under bay after bay of the stark precipice that shoots up over you on the left in a long ascending wall. Close at the feet of this the hunters' track pursues its narrow way through thickets of an ugly gawky barberry with very vigorous, vindictive, and venomous thorns. It has no room to wander or spread itself, this track, for from the foot of the cliffs the mountain-side falls far and far to the huge torn ravines beneath your feet on the right, whose abysmal darkness the eye cannot plumb from here, so far down do they plunge into the flank of the earth, dank with mossy ledges of Anemone, and embedded in ancient tangle of copse and stunted woodland, to replace their vanished waters. From here there is no guessing at the neighbourhood of Thundercrown, which towers away to the left round at the head of this precipice wall, which is its main southward spur; but straight ahead you have an inspiring prospect up into the huge broken rocky buttresses, the enormous lawns and

gullies and shelving laps of alpine turf between the outcrops of cliff on the mountain masses that lead the eye at last to the gaunt splendours of the arête high above; while across the wooded gorges you command the chaos of huge and fantastic wooded precipices and pinnacles which had so baffled us that day of the climb behind the Pink Temple, whose culminating point, the dank and sheer declivity of the Grand-Violet, is now in sight, on a level with ourselves, unfolded in its true character as a dark and evil cliff-face across the torn labyrinth of cañons down in the intervening depths.

The easy way is very refreshing after the toil of the first ascent. More and more lavish grow the drifts of blushing, rose-sweet Peonies, and their pink, dainty roses never show so well as at one point beneath a fallen boulder the size of a chapel, where over them hover and flutter the expanded lavender butterflies of the Harebell Poppy. I first saw the Harebell Poppy in bloom some five hundred feet lower down in a fold of the grass on the ascent, but have reserved its entrance on my stage for this point, when it may more fitly take the scene, though, alas! not in this first season can I ever show you the full beauty of it, only to be revealed in its central home on the high bleak moors of the Da Tung, where for many a mile the Alps are a shimmering surf of its blue drops, quivering in the delicate radiant air over an ocean of pale, golden-eyed Asters, amid pink-faced Primulas and golden sheets of Geum in the fine turf of the highlands at from twelve to fourteen thousand feet. *Meconopsis quintuplinervia*, in fact, "so to call her what she rightful is," by her unusually hideous and non-descriptive botanical name—which I hope her charms and her general popularity in our

gardens (if she condescends to accept it) may force us to replace by some such more loving and homely title as I suggest—is at present the sovereign of all her race for good breeding and refinement of exquisite charm. Gorgeousness, indeed, is the speciality of the family, a gorgeousness of size and colour that often verges on the flamboyant, and threatens to topple over into the vulgar (and actually does so in the case of *M. integrifolia*). But *M. quintuplinervia* has struck out a line for herself. Not for her the crude splendour of the crimpled Lampshade Poppy, not the flaunting scarlets of the Blood Poppy, the prickly hostility and rigid mace-like port of the Celestial Poppy. From the clump of soft and narrow pointed leaves of greyish tone, with their hairy coat, springs up the delicate and swanlike grace of the stems, each one of which swings out a solitary hanging bell of dainty loveliest soft lavender blue that only on the sunniest of days swells open to a shallow pendent patten; and otherwise vary but rarely, though twice I have happened on pure albinos whose snowy loveliness was quite beyond expression, and once on an albinoid with beautifully contrasting purple base; and more often with a form that almost threatens the supremacy of the white, in which the bells are of a gentle pure turquoise blue, through which the original lavender tone lingers only as a sort of general ghostly reminiscence that lends the blossom the changing charm of an opal in different lights, or of some fairy silk woven iridescent on an elfin loom. All over the upper alps of the north-eastern March this Oread leads her delicate dances, loving always the colder, damper slopes and situations, till at last she attains her supreme happiness in the Da Tung range, where the moss grows dense amid the scrub of small

THE HAREBELL POPPY. MECONOPSIS QUINTUPLINERVIA

Rhododendrons on all the sunless sides of the hills, and makes the poppy perfectly happy in its cool moist bed above the rich humus where it roots.

In fact, patient though it seems of all conditions, the Harebell Poppy quite clearly is happier in proportion as its subterranean thirst is satisfied and its comparative dislike for grilling situations and aspects respected—until, of course, you come to the open, highest alps of all, where there is no question of shade or shelter, nor of drought and grilling either; and where, accordingly, the Harebell Poppy expands in a rapturous riot of well-being which can still, of course, afford no rule of culture for wholly different climates at a much lower elevation. The last possible slur on her character was removed when, for the first time in her history, I was able immediately to discern that she breaks the general rule of her family in being a sound perennial. She forms, in short, thick cushiony wads, developing densely in a mass from very short woody rhizomes. In winter this is a brown pat of deadness, but if you look you can see the fat, comfortable buds of next year, round and plump and pale green, lurking at the heart of each lump of dead mush that represents last season's rosette; and in due time these will unfold, and each send up its single bell of beauty, and then die away with their successor at their heart. I cannot speculate as to the usual longevity of the Harebell Poppy, but certainly in these hills it cannot live much less than three or four years at the least, and many are the wide masses that must have taken very much longer for their development, and are still increasing in strength and glory.

On Thundercrown the Harebell Poppy, though her charm is such as always to be taking away your breath anew, never achieves, I say, the sickening and belly-

griping rapture that it provokes in the Da Tung on a radiant day of July. But, to make up, the general jewellery of the alpine turf is richer here and more varied, for now we draw nearer to the high lawns above the last limit of the trees and scrub. The track climbs steeply round bay after bay under the cliffs, toiling up successive spurs through coarse grass and herbage and scrub of bamboo. On the ledges close overhead on your left the snowy Anemone flops in splendour, and strange dots of yellow impregnably far up on the rim of the precipice suggest the presence of the Citron Primula. I thought I also saw Proud Margaret, and plunged through the copse of sharp-thorned barberry to ascertain, but found only the Lampshade Poppy in a congregation of buds. At one point the mud of the little track was full of a charming new Primula, never seen afterwards anywhere else, but which proved ultimately to be only a form of that variable beauty, *P. gemmifera*, to which I will introduce you later in finer form. At this point a number of enormous boulders like scattered churches are lodged on the slope amid coppice of tree-juniper and other stunted growths.

The climb is long before you reach the base of the alpine zone. But at length another wide bay of the down brings you into sight of it, sloping steeply upwards overhead. Round the deep dell of Junipers and barberries and *Rosa sericea* you wind at leisure, watching the occasional violet flares of the imperial Primula* where it perks stalwartly up with its crowded heads of blossom amid the pale long tangles of dead grass that fill the scrub and the open fell-side. Now begins the climb up a high, high bank, whence all the vegetation has been burned some three seasons since, and which since,

* *P. Woodwardii.*

accordingly, has erupted into a new growth of brilliant emerald green which from afar has a deceivingly alpine look on so many of these comparatively arid mountain-flanks. It is all young shootings of the coarse grass among the charred sticks of the scrub. Only here and there have alpine poppies and Primulas begun to establish their hold, and one is very glad to be done with that toilsome pull, where the straight fierce spines of the ugly, gawky barberry* have lost in death nothing of the virulence and venom that distinguishes them in life. At last, however, this stage also is accomplished, and we find ourselves at the very foot of the enormous alpine lawns that now come rolling down upon us from two high glens, one of which descends immediately from the curtain of precipice which is the southern face of Thundercrown, while the other coils out of a towering ravine of cliffs by which you can ascend straight in front of you to the Ridge, behind the prominent outcrop which stands off from the main mountain in a spur, and separates these two vales with its bulk of cliffs, interspersed with countless laps of lawn that look mere dapplings on the face of the mass, towering so high that you cannot see its top.

The ascent of Thundercrown is one of many marked stages. First up to Barley Bee; thence to Big Stone, where horses are to be left; next to the little col; and now to Vanishing Waters, before you attempt the penultimate stretch of toil up the grass-fells that ascend at last to the hem of the stony cataclysms and wild moorlands which fill the uppermost basin at the base of the final cliffs. Vanishing Waters is the place where we

* In a recent account of such another scene in China the author depicts it as covered with "Burberries." How often does one wish it indeed were!

had first hoped to pitch our camp, on account of two most lovely little crystal rills that here converged, each from one of the upland valleys, flowing white and sparkling over their bed of white pebbles in glades of willow and barberry, with little head of a tiny primrose Rhododendron flopping amid the moss along their boulders in the shady places of the dene.* What, then, was our horror that day to find those pleasant streamlets now all gone as dry as any bone, and to realise that the tired procession of bearers must go toiling higher yet up the hog's-back down of lawn to the first trace of permanent water or lingering water near the knees of Thundercrown, whence the melting snow-streams might not yet have had time to evaporate wholly in the summer heat or to sink away undiscoverable in the earth.

And now for the first time one begins to discover the dimensions of those gentle-looking downs that had looked so smooth and simple from the precipice up above the Pink Temple that day when we looked at them across the intervening depths, and imagined them a half-hour's easy stroll to the base of the Thundercrown wall. Not so, indeed, but each faint undulation proves a mighty and long toil, ripple over ripple of what is really an enormous rib of alp, descending on either side into deep gullies and chines of boscage, where amid the willows and Rhododendrons and the creaming, arching foam of the Spiræas the startled musk deer go wildly bounding through the swishing surf of the shrubbery, looking, in their high leaps, like a flight of grey kangaroos. The steeper side of that rib falls away, however, into a gorge of Juniper-clad precipices, which from over the way

* Very close to *Rh. anthopogon* in colour and odour, but frail and weakly and floppeting in habit. *Rh. præclarum*, sp. *nova*.

had looked the merest wrinkle in the fell. Now it is a superb wild chine, conveying the larger of the Vanishing Waters from its cradle at the feet of the Thundercrown precipice down through the cañon it carved for itself in cooler, damper ages to the point at which it now so ignominiously disappears in the earliest heats of summer on the heights. You may ascend that lawn on either side the ghyll, and either route will bring you all the beauty and wonder of those alpine paradises. But the directest way is up the main rib on the left of the gorge, into whose dark and cavernous depth you can pause at intervals to peer, thus alike satisfying scientific zeal and the need of your overdriven heart for repose at every few yards of the climb. For, ascending from such a depth to such a height, the strain on the heart is obvious and unmistakable, adding markedly to the length and labour of the climb. In the unaccustomed conditions of the air it buzzes and bumps, and there is no hurrying and skipping upwards as you can hurry on our Alps; but you have to go leisurely and laboriously, with many a rest to give that much-tried organ a chance of catching up with your pace. But better a burst and broken heart for some new Primula or poppy than for the fairest of all the fair flowers that flaunt in London drawing-rooms.

And what is that we suddenly behold—some strange tone of purple, surely, in one tiny spark of colour on the cliff of the gorge among the purples and lavenders of the Irids and the Harebell Poppy? Through the tangle of Juniper and Rhododendron I wrestled and tore my way to the foot of the cliff, and up through the tangle of their impeding pendent branches I struggled from ledge to ledge until the treasure was within my grasp. And behold a little poppy of the rarest and most

radiant charm, a poppy, too, that was obviously new to the pages of the *Pflanzenreich*, with a stature of only six or seven inches, and ample tasselly blooms of many petals, held boldly horizontal, of finest Coan silkiness, in filmy iridescent shades of blue and violet, like little Catherine-wheels woven from the purple prisms of the rainbow.* The Dainty Poppy is the darling and Benjamin of her race. From that moment of rapture I saw her often, more and more beautiful, with several flowers pendulous up her stem, in the alpine lawns of Thundercrown; but only on the less sunny exposures and slopes of the fells, and only in and out among the grass in the little steep outcrops of rock and cliff, never in the open grass of the fell itself. In fact she has a very special tendency towards cool gully-banks and small ledgy steps of broken limestone scar-sides. It is so that you may also see her in the dark cold walls at the top of the gorges, ascending, on the shady side of the cliffs, actually to within a few hundred feet of the Roterdspitze. Alas that her habit, after the pernicious fashion so prevalent in her family, is to flower and die—a fact that makes the pursuit of her seed a matter so much more harrowing and vital!

Such a discovery sweetens any climb with an ecstasy that hardly even the slaughterer's of a new dead beast can rival, and which no less fortunate mortal can hope so much as to understand. Now, while the bearers toiled onwards up the ridge with their burdens, I myself descended glibly into the depths of the ghyll, and ascended on its farther side, in complete forgetfulness of bumping heart, through cool tangles of shrubbery and alpine coppice, until I came to the steep open banks and ledges of rock above. Along these I traversed,

* *Meconopsis lepida*, sp. *nova*.

in continual raptures, with ever-increasing exhibitions of the Dainty Poppy, dancing amid fine herbage up and down the broken scarps of the little cliffs, amid Harebell Poppies and golden little Stars of Bethlehem, and a bewildering enamel of Irids that yet could never divert or deceive one from the characteristic soft and silken deep lavender blue and purples of the new treasure. Who was it told me, in so loud and authoritative a boom that it held all Vincent Square enthralled, that China was "played out"? Such a playing out it is, even on this solitary and rather arid mass of limestone, which is bound inevitably to yield but a limited and disappointing flora! The disappointments of China, on Thundercrown alone, are represented by seven Primulas, five poppies, five Androsaces, together with such a lavishness of other makeweights as would make the reputation of any European height for themselves alone, and set all the learned on pilgrimage.

For as soon as you have emerged from the ghyll, and left almost the last lingering trace of coppice behind in the danker hollows, you emerge at length upon the full glory of the alpine turf, and the botanical exhaustion of China leaps plain to view, dappling the huge lawns so densely with jewels of every colour as far as the eye can see that one seems to be treading some sainted Cinquecento Paradise of Fra Angelico. Away up the far slopes, still pale from the winter, loom serried plantations and forests of the Lampshade Poppy, standing stiffly up in awkward candelabra of primrose great orbs up and down the fells—noble and imposing in its multitudinous display, yet graceless, lumping, and without refinement of habit. Especially in comparison with the fluttering fairiness of the Harebell Poppy scattered here and there among it, rising above

a firmament of big wide silver stars of an Edelweiss far more magnificent than any form of our own alps, here abundant as daisies in the turf, with starfishes of many-rayed, narrow-rayed blossom-heads borne handsomely aloft from the large neat rosettes of equally starfish-like foliage, which here is of a deep and lustrous emerald green, with none of the flannelly fluff which otherwise usually distinguishes all forms of *Leontopodium alpinum*, and will be found yet higher up on this same mountain in an inferior cousin.

Asters like little mauve-and-purple marguerites bedeck the turf, and twinkle with cheerful eyes of bright gold among the innumerable butterflies of the Iris that here takes another form, so distinct from the violet-spotted, leopardy beauty of the lower slopes that for long I refused to recognise the same species in this high alpine variety, shorter and stouter alike in leaf and stem, finer and larger in the flower, and with the purple velvet spots softened into a dim soft brindling on the lavender falls. All over the alp it throws its dancing cloak of colour, amid which glitter small globe-flowers, belying their name in being more like big flat-faced buttercups of richest gold on stems of only a few inches. Citron-yellow Fritillaries ring their chimes occasionally, and sometimes vary to a dingy maroon, after the way of the race. The Stars of Bethlehem shine out more rarely, and through the grasses runs a honeysuckle of such modest views that it always hugs the earth, threading the tangles of the herbage with its heads of crystalline soft pink little trumpets, like heads of paler *Daphne petræa*, spreading upon the air as you go an entrancing fragrance even more pervasive than that which floats from the cliffs of the Tombea in July. And among all these clamouring lovelinesses, above them, dominating

them with the more sombre splendour of its note, rises the occasional stately presence of the imperial Primula. It is none too common, *Primula Woodwardii*, yet sufficiently abundant when you consider the multitudes of it over the expanse of the fell, though never do you see it in colonies or drifts, but only occasionally towering up here and there on the slopes. It is a rank and stately thing, with a rosette of leaves as stout as a cabbage, from which, when the foliage is developed, arises a nine-inch stem unfolding a crowded ring of dark violet-purple stars so arranged and so crowded on their slender, arching foot-stalks as to form a flattened wheel-like head. It especially loves to poke and pry amid the scant shelter of the lightest coppice, but flourishes no less superbly higher up all over the alpine sward to the final arête, rejoicing in the cool peaty turf of the fells and the comfortable alpine conditions. For here its long fat root-stock, with comparatively few stout, white, spaghetti-like roots emerging from its clubbed end, can partake sufficiently of summer's moisture, and then go to rest, firmly, hard, and perfectly dry, in the frozen ground throughout the alpine winter. And without such conditions at home I doubt if *P. Woodwardii* will ever greatly or permanently condescend, for its whole habit and easily rotted stout root-stock give ample warning of a temper as perilous and peevish as is so much the rule in the glorious group of *P. nivalis*.*

And now I have topped the first ascent of the lawns above the ghyll, and before me, enclosed on either hand in gigantic stone-slides and precipices, lies only the

* The doubt is quite unjustified and the warning wholly without foundation. *P. Woodwardii*, of all my Primulas, proves perhaps the most hearty and easy and permanent in cultivation, so far, and develops a white-eyed beauty and an elegance of which its more corpulent splendour in the wilds had given no promise.

tumble of wild brown moorland which fills the last mile or so of the hollow up to the curtain wall of Thundercrown itself, now straight ahead, towering far up, in the chaos of its ruinous and naked magnificence. Across the dip by the ghyll I see the carriers at length unfurling their burdens and setting up the tents on the crown of the fell just on a little lap, whence it sinks to a small hollow filled with the big glossy Rhododendron. So down I climbed, and across the chine and up again. Luxuriant in the radiant sunlight we lay out among the flowers in the soft turf, gazing down on the microscopic plan of Siku just visible, or one corner of it at least, away below in the blazing depths of the Blackwater Valley.

But Thundercrown, as the peasants of the valley had warned us, is a mountain of no easy temper, and soon he left us no doubt that he was affronted at our intrusion. Grim wafts of icy wind drove down from the summit, and grey wraiths of clouds gathered more and more heavily round the enveloping peaks and precipices overhead, and the air of Thundercrown grew ever colder and colder towards us, till we were chilled to the bone and retired to the shelter of the tents. Having failed to dislodge us by these comparatively civil and lenient hints, the mountain then lost his temper, and began to cry with rage, in long, icy flaws of rain that swept down in steady torrents, lashed into spattering special furies every now and then by violent gales and hysterical sobs of tempest that the infuriate spirit would from time to time send in a wild whirlwind round our tents, which flapped and fluttered and bowed their heads beneath the tearing strokes of the wind and the innumerable sudden slappings of the squalls, but stood bravely firm against the outmost efforts of the

air. And now at last the full anger of the mountain was roused to make itself heard. Thundercrown lifted up his voice and howled aloud in volleys of bellowing thunder, announcing to all his brothers and sisters of Tibet this outrage he was suffering, this microscopic intrusion that he was powerless to repel. Awfully his utterance resounded from the crags and precipices, black in the darkness of the storm, except when the lightnings lit them in a ghastly glare and was gone. It was a grim welcome into regions notoriously haunted of demons, nor was there any secret made of it to the world. Far down in Siku they would certainly be knowing what Thundercrown thought about our invasion of his sanctity, and I agonised over the vicarious vengeance he was probably taking below in the way of rice and millet ruined by hail. What welcome should we get, then, on our return to the bankrupted city, always supposing that there were not yet worse surprises in store for us to emerge from the black depths of the sacred rock-bound lake on the summit, whence the spirit might move in such fearful form as to put us for ever beyond need of contemplating a return? So ended, in dense and violent darkness, our first night on the knees of Thundercrown; gradually the raging giant howled and roared and wept himself into fatigue, and went to sleep, thus at last allowing us a chance of following suit.

He was still in the sulks next day, and we found ourselves wrapped in a cold white darkness of cloud driving up the valley from below. There was nothing to be done but go across to the rocks and try for a photograph of the white Anemone, after which there came a faint chill gleam that allowed us to sit out for a while and survey the world. But that chilly smile was not meant

for us; it was an answer of approval to the way the Satanee Alps were responding to the complaints of their kinsman. Sympathetic fury brooded along those distant and tremendous peaks, stretching in a line across the distance. Never have I seen so appalling a violet storm as was then evidently raging in the hearts of the Satanee Alps, to an accompaniment of almost uninterrupted thunder. It was quite plain that Castleberg and the Felsenhorn and Chagoling all sympathised heartily with the wounded feelings of their brother, and were now giving vent to their own extreme rage at having let us out of their clutches so cheaply. Never would they have done such a thing, they were plainly saying, had they realised that we were planning a whole series of outrages upon the cousinhood. So they blared and roared in a drone of far-off thunder, and Thundercrown himself, touched by these evidences of sympathy, was melted by his own rage, and now once more began to cry.

But this time he cried a great deal more in anger than in sorrow. He cried with a glacial passion of fury, in floods of horizontal lashing hail that threatened to flog the tents to ribbons, hissing down from the summit on the wings of so desperate a gale that the mountain was obviously making a serious effort to blow us all out into space. Had it not been so uncomfortable it would almost have been pathetic, this huge and immemorial being so vainly trying every means of dislodging invaders so infinitely insignificant, such minute fleas itching on his flank. Soon, in my small tent, I felt as if I were in an angry green balloon; it flapped and floundered and flopped and bellied, and threatened every moment to depart into space, till at last I bolted for safety into the big tent, and there found things a good deal worse

than in my own. For this was nothing better than a perilous cave of yelling rending gales, and the hail outside was deafening. Everybody was very miserable, and the poor Chinese lay piled upon one another in heaps for warmth, looking like a bundle of limp dead fish on a counter. So I returned ere long to my own place, and crept into bed once more, feeling everything damp around me. Shivering I lay waiting for the sleep that was impossible while the hail continued its screeching cannonade, and thought lovingly of the black coverlet I had lent to mitigate the anguish of the servants. But at last the mountain again wearied of his tantrums and grew still—still with the calm of perfect exhaustion.

I think a Buddha, or at least a Bodhisattva, must have passed that night into the tired heart of Thundercrown, for when the dawn came the great mountain was as bland and smiling and beautiful as if it had never known a cloud. Agog with gratitude for this change of face, we seized the moment and made off for the summit in the earliest hours of sunrise. The ascent of Thundercrown offers no peril or difficulty to allure the climber. There are at least two obvious ways up. Either you can ascend the valley of the camp to the foot of the main precipice, which itself is quite unnegotiable, but which has a steep stony couloir filled with ice-beds, by which the top can be attained in a couple of hours or so; or else, abandoning hope of the cliffs and ridges immediately overhead on your right, you can cross round the front of the huge buttress in which that spur concludes, and so attack the arête from behind it *en route* for the summit. It was this way that we preferred, as giving better hopes of access than the couloir, as to the possibilities of which we could not then be sure; whereas it had been plain from a little

lower down the valley that a succession of grassy downs and bays led up behind the intervening fell to the ridge, and from the ridge it would surely be hard luck if we could not get to the top, this being only a much higher and wilder continuation of it in a stratified series of limestone tumbles and cliffs and desolations of naked rock.

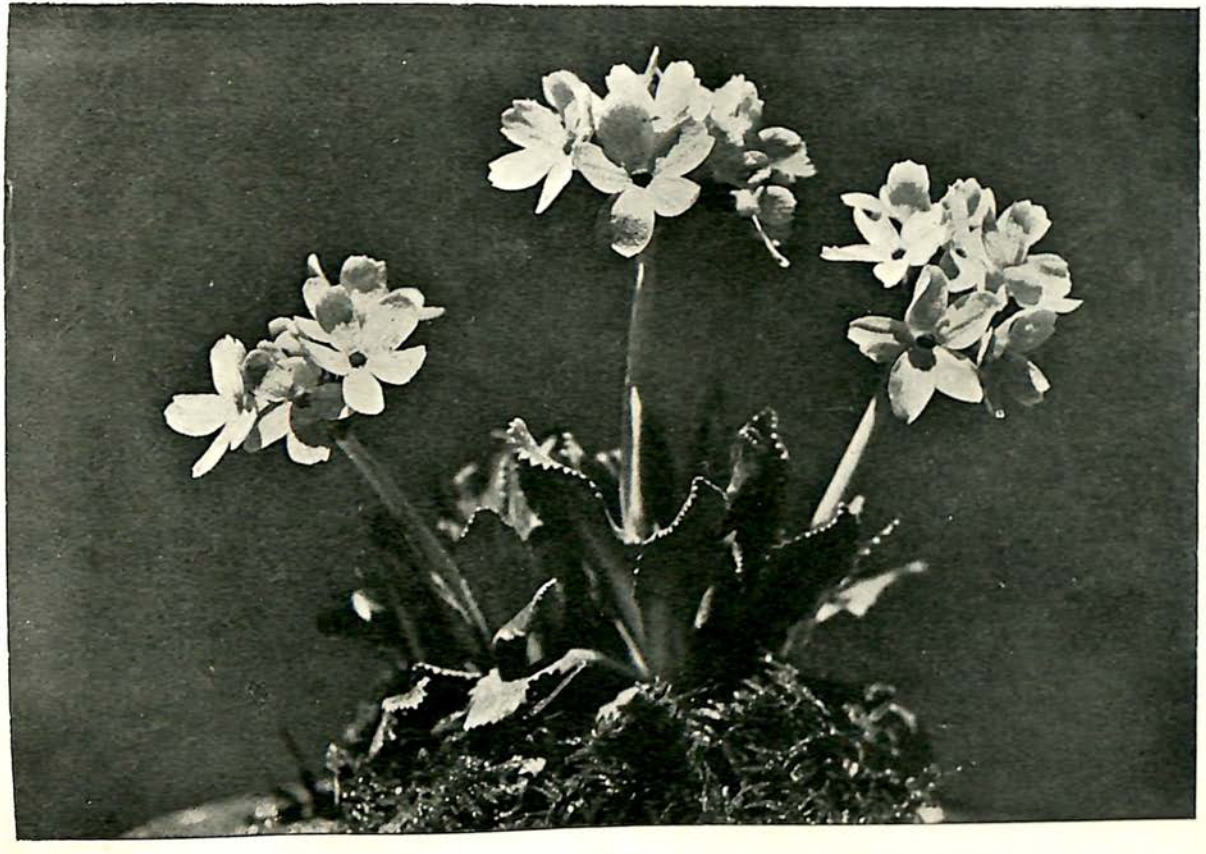
Down into the depths of the Rhododendron ghyll we plunged, and up its farther side, and thence along among the lingering towers of the Lampshade Poppy, diagonally round the flank of the big spur, which is of alpine grass *moutonné* with rank over rank over rank of limestone cliffs and outcrops. It is well to mark out your route round that frontage beforehand, for fear of being held up by some impassable drop or climb; otherwise it is a delightful piece of work, gradually ascending and continuing in a series of little sloping grassy shelves from bluff to bluff of the outcrops, with steep grassy couloirs between each. In that radiant morning after the storm, the very air seemed to dance and sparkle, and the flowers glittered with gladness. Again and again we had to stop and worship the rain-washed, fresh loveliness of the Dainty Poppy, swinging out her silken Catherine-wheels of violet-blue from the comfortable crannies and conjunctures of the ledges in sudden flares of colour that one made for from afar. And all the choir joined in from turf and cliff—Anemone, Rock-nymph, Fritillary, Aster, Fairy Bell, and globe-flower. The only song that absolutely lacks on Thunder-crown itself, so far as I could ever discover, is that of the Grand-Violet.

Thus from buttress to buttress one advances round the front of the spur, and finds oneself immediately in a glen of coarse turf ascending steeply round its farther

side. I was just girding my loins to the anticipation of a new plant when I saw the cliff overhead on my left to be plastered with wads of whiteness here and there, and my heart jumped to think of *Androsace imbricata* making just these same wads of whiteness across the world. For here was *A. tapete*, her nearest cousin in the family, growing after the same model and in the same gaunt and naked precipices at the topmost limit of vegetation, except that *A. tapete* grows in masses so much larger that you often see flat sheets of white almost a yard across. And *A. tapete* has another special charm of her own, for the wee, compressed, and compacted rosettes are silver-grey with silk, instead of downily, mossily green as in *A. helvetica;* so that at all times it has a peculiar loveliness, no richer when it is a tight carpet of snow than when it is a flat hard hassock half a yard across of the most delicate velvety silver sheen and softness. But, like her Swiss cousin, *A. tapete* is exclusively a plant of the high limestones, and has none of the indifference that marks *A. tibetica* and *A. mucronifolia.* Only on the calcareous cliffs of the highest alpine zone will you find it, all up the north-eastern March, till in the far-off Da Tung, which are chiefly of elder, barren, igneous rock, the dolomitic outbreaks yield you the earliest and best but not the only show of its glistering wide scabs of silver in the cliffs.

Otherwise that turfy dell produced nothing of note, though in its naked watercourse, where the snow had only just vanished from the dank and sodden banks of earth and shingle, the Rock-nymph was in singular beauty and in the coarse herbage of the slope the Lampshade Poppy attained in rare specimens a magnitude and magnificence that I have not yet seen equalled. The first climb concludes in a circular sedgy tarn-hollow without

a tarn; from the tussocked marsh which is all it now is the watercourse tears its way downwards. On every side this is enclosed in a cirque of precipices and shingle-slopes from the main arête and the spur round which we have come. The way up is quite plain: it is merely to make for the easiest-looking shingle-slope and the lowest point of the ridge. And here at once behold a new treasure, for in the raw, red-looking loam and gravel of the scree, immediately the snow has left it, there springs everywhere the tight-bunched stars of a lovely lavender-blue Primula (*P. optata*, sp. *nova*), blinking out quite stemless at first from a nest of dark-emerald leaves, but shooting up almost as you watch, till all over the slope there stand firm delicate stems, as dusty as so many millers with white meal, each of them crowned by a loose ample dome of blue stars. The Oread Primula beats the imperial Primula out of the field, with its bluer larger beauty, its much more refined and well-bred habit in all stages, from the moment when its beautiful toothed foliage of glossiest dark green (sometimes powdered) begins to throw up that soft and snow-white stalwart stalk on which are already opening those larger, lovelier flowers of softer, lovelier colour, further enhanced by a curious and delicate fragrance, as of an ancient apple-cupboard that is overrun with mice. It beats the imperial Primula, too, in offering much better hopes for the garden, not having any long fat root-stock to rot with, but starting out immediately in the dank shingle with a network of fine rose-red roots as different as possible from the sparse spaghetti on which the other relies. This is exclusively a plant of the very highest alpine zone; you never see it until you are almost on the last verge of vegetation on the Min S'an. Instead of growing as isolated specimens here



THE OREAD PRIMULA. PRIMULA OPTATA, SP. NOVA

and there in the turf, this beauty abounds in wide drifts and sweeps and colonies where nothing else can thrive, glorifying all the highest stone-slides and the earthier open places of the scree, on the russet gritty barrenness of which it towers in solitary splendour, and thence descends into the high-alpine beck-beds of the topmost glens, where it shines pure and hearty in the shingles, and here and there in the crannies between boulder and boulder, occasionally, though rarely, producing a second tier of flowers above the first, though this does not rise far above, so as to give the effect of a lanky dome rather than of two separate layers of bloom.*

From the arête you come into sight of the summit again, now rising ahead of you in a bewildering series of rock walls and desolations of bare boulders, with sweeps of shingle under a rounded high crest where a snow-cornice still lingers. But very soon advance becomes impossible along the knife-edge of the ridge. High stark cliffs bar the way, and it is necessary to traverse over on to the northern face of the arête, which falls away in a sheer tremendous line of precipices to the slope on which this huge alpine chain rises immediately from the tumble of undistinguished little cultivated ups and downs that fill all the northern landscape as far as eye can reach. The traverse, however, does not take long, though it is necessary to pick your way with care, and we were kept in alarm by the Go-go, who would go capering regardless in the wildest places, while the more prudent Mee, goggle-eyed with terror of the hills, kept closely on our heels in a mood of deep despondency that was not lightened by the

* Whatever be the future achievements of *P. optata* sp. *nova* this whole paragraph proves unjust to the prowess of *P. Woodwardii* in gardens, alike as to its beauty and its prosperity.

Go-go's grinning expatiations on the splendour of the coffin we would buy him if he died up here. But we were not the only wanderers on these cliffs, for suddenly there was a scuttering and a squawking, and we saw Mr. and Mrs. Snow-cock shepherding their flock of floundering babies across the face of a sheer-looking precipice where it seemed as if hardly a fly could have kept foothold, let alone an awkward fat lumbering bird on the build of a great goose with pink feet. However, across it they smoothly skimmed in a manner quite miraculous, and were gone; on the far side of the buttress we could still hear them clacking and chuckling to the children about this unprecedented disturbance. No other sound broke the intense clear silence of that high place.

A nick in the arête now once more gives access to the southern face and the sunlight, and the next stages of the ascent look very simple. Far above still there looms the rounded height of the snow-cornice that may or may not be the summit. From this, in a semicircular sweep, descends a long steep bank of detritus to the very lip of the curtain precipice that impends over the head of the valley above the camp. And these glissades of shingle are broken by countless buttresses and teeth of cliff standing out from the ridge above you on the right. Your way now leads you over the notches of each buttress, and across the steep and narrow interspaces of scree between. All the world here is a gaunt and naked desolation of the grimmest sort; only the Rock-nymph still glints rare in the clefts, and in the earth-pans of the scree-slope and in the chines of shingle between buttress and buttress colonies of the Oread Primula stand up blue and sweet, quite unnatural in their brave and brilliant gaiety in so gaunt a place.

The final ascent is made diagonally up along the chief expanse of scree and shingle, where the hassocks of the dark and undiscernible Potentilla alone at present show signs of life, dotted over the banks of grit beneath the snow-cornice which is clearly weeping itself towards an early grave. As one toils towards the impending crest the liveliest curiosity and anxiety develop more and more keenly in one's breast—that old, old anxiety of the climber: What am I going to see when I get up there? Shall I see more and higher summits, and deep gulfs between me and them, or precipices forbidding farther ascent? Thundercrown, however, was conquered. He had spent already so much of his energy in rage that now he had no malevolent surprises left in store. From the crest of the snow-cornice we came immediately into view of his summit, rounded, leisurely, and quite close at hand, beyond a gentle little stretch of stroll. Five minutes later we stood upon the very head and brow of Thundercrown.

And where was that stern and rock-bound lake of dark waters where the Soul of Thunder has its home and broods terrors for the intruder? What we found was a flat and dimpled little shallow marsh, perhaps two inches deep in the puddles that were obviously going to disappear altogether very shortly, as soon as summer should have dried the dank brown tussocks of the turf, from which the snow had but just gone, leaving this awe-inspiring tarn in its place. Nor was there any sign of life as yet awakening over the flattened wide dome. Only with pains could the relics of an Androsace be observed which ultimately proved *A. mucronifolia*, general in these Alps at the very highest elevations only, just on the actual tops of the mountains, in their final cap of soft lawn. I should put the heights of

Thundercrown approximately as follows: Taking the Russian estimate of Siku as being four thousand six hundred feet above the sea, Barley Bee should be about seven, Big Stone eight, the col of the pinnacle nine, Vanishing Waters between ten and eleven, the camp twelve, and the Crown of Thunder some three thousand feet above that. But these are all mere tentative suggestions, for though they are endorsed by aneroids, of aneroids I myself have the gravest distrust, which I find more dimly echoed in the much discreeter pages of scientific journals. To me an aneroid is a strange and chancy instrument of black magic. So far as I can see, despite the most learned and elaborate elucidations, what you do with an aneroid is to tweedle round its face until you have got the pointer at the height that you think you ought to be at; and then you say in triumph, "There you are," holding out the unanswerable instrument in proof of your discernment.

The view from the summit of Thundercrown is as disappointing as that from most summits. In the south, indeed, you have all the fullest splendour of the Satanee range expanded across the world, with other and other chains beyond. But these are all delights to which one has grown accustomed, and on the north it is such a bathos to see only the cultivated tame undulations of China extending away and away into the unrelieved dull distance. The southern view, in fact, is that of the Tibetan March; but on the northern side the Min S'an has no parallel with its own last tail-end, and consequently the Great Ridge stands up in solitary domination over an uneventful land, which, being uneventful, is once more safely and comfortably China, the genuine south-west corner of Kansu, as against the fanciful inclusion of what is rightly Tibet.

Very magnificent, though, is the enormous splendour of the Great Ridge itself, as you dominate its whole length from the summit of Thundercrown. As for Siku and the valley of the Blackwater, these literally seem to be in another world, as far beneath one and as alien as a strange country seen from an aeroplane. And on the other side rises a mountain mass hitherto quite unsuspected, Thundercrown's twin, a flat-topped citadel of huge precipices, now darkening in the storm which Thundercrown has at last lugged his exhausted energies into brewing against us. Beyond this there appears to be some large break or bend in the continuity of the range before, very far away in the western distance, the eye is caught, but not diverted from the dulness of the general landscape, by the towers and spires of the main Min S'an.

It was too late to be summoning up storms against us, and rather undignified. However, we had now seen all we wanted, and thoroughly learned the secrets of the mountain. So now, beneath the rapidly blackening sky, we decided to adventure down into the dank darkness of the big couloir, which previous investigations from below had already given us hope might give access to and from the summit. And so, in fact, it proved; only once or twice was the rope necessary, and then only to negotiate a steep little ice-cliff or some other such impediment as would almost certainly have vanished in a month's time. Down and down in the sombre depths of the ravine we plunged, and as the walls towered higher and higher over our descent the darkness and gloom of that dank chine grew more and more ominous. It is a rough way, over wild boulder-beds accumulated in the throat of the gorge so steeply that you have to be careful lest one stepping-stone shall

bring a cartload more upon your heels from behind. Occasionally there were lingering islets, choking the gully, of ice-hard snow at the same precipitous angle; but on the whole, though long and laborious and gloomy, the descent of the couloir offers no event and no new flowers, though the Celestial Poppy enjoys this stony haunt, and so at intervals does *Primula optata*. Finally, then, without mishap, we debouched from the mouth of the combe upon the enormous sweeps of red bare earth and shingle that descend in a wild circle from the base of the Thundercrown precipices to the head-waters of the little beck that is born from his melting snows.

Just now, in the last week in June, all this expanse was bright golden with a small strange Ranunculaceous plant which I do not much like, but which certainly makes an astonishing effect, and will be dear to the hearts of all who can do with the shrill and tainted metallic yellows of Adonis. It huddles in tufts all over the gaunter desolations of the highest Alps, and among its fat and fleshy little spatulate leaves squat a number of large flowers made of very many pointed, narrow petals that expand in a shallow saucer round the green central knob, and each, at the same distance half-way down its length, dies out into a transparency that gives the shrill blossom a look of having a wide, dusky-coloured eye. Indeed, a clump well furnished with its picturesque many-rayed saucers makes a fine effect of tarnished gold, and when that effect is repeated over a whole scree till the scene is one sheet of yellow the value of the plant is still better appreciated, especially where the yellow sheet is shot with shimmering blue by accompanying millions of a funny little sapphire-coloured Wulfenia of the highest shingles, which rejoices almost beyond its merits in the beautiful name of *Lagotis*

Ramalana, abounding, like the other, throughout all the high screes of the March as far north, at least, as the Da Tung Alps—where, however, it takes a rather larger form, with uninspiring dull white flowers, which may turn out to be a different species.

The caldron of screes and shingle-slides and stone-tumbles that converge in a tumult of desolation from the cirque of the Thundercrown precipices is a wild and weird spot. In the melting snow time a hundred streams shoot down over the rim of the main precipices in lances and shafts of light, each to tear a little ghyll for itself through the deep banks under the rock, till all meet to form the beck of the upland valley—that brief precarious flow which had so played us false at Vanishing Waters, and is nowhere in its upper course to be relied on after the middle of June. Chaos and a huge gaunt splendour are the keynotes of the place. Far overhead all round you are gloomed down on by naked peaks and ridges from which the sweeps of stone descend in grand stern lines, interspersed with rare strips of dark tussocky moorland turf, in which occasionally flames the violet of the imperial Primula, while *P. optata* nestles brilliant in the shingles about the beck, and sometimes flaunts even in snug hollows of the cliffs themselves. These, though presenting a vast smooth face from a distance, look very different when you have worried up on the little chines that sink from their base, and find yourself looking into labyrinths of waterfall and gully and deep clefts, dark and darker in the curtains of the precipice that impend upon you overhead till the eye can climb no farther, in wall above wall of smooth and shining limestone, where the trickles and cascades from the melting snows so far overhead still moisten the precipice, or float in diminishing wraiths

of white. The drip and singing splashes of the waterfalls only serve to intensify the vast solemn silence of the place, and its austerity grows but the more impressive from the frail beauties of pink and lavender and purple Primula that hang in the rocks or hover in the shingles as you carefully pick your way among the boulders, or ascend some sombre chine up under the precipice over beds of lingering snow. Isopyrum in all the crannies flickers with its cups of golden-hearted pearly paleness, and in the cracks of the precipice stand up the spiky spires of the Celestial Poppy; but the valley-head has that awful and lonely lifelessness from which no flowers can cheer these ultimate homes of the gods in the highest secret heart of the hills.

The mountain, meanwhile, was mouthing and meditating his moods overhead. Dark were the clouds he had brooded against us, too late to be of any use. Of this he now seemed to have a salutary sense, and attempted nothing further, except a perfunctory frigid spitting of hail as we descended the couloir, just to show us, as a mere form, that, though he acquiesced in our achievement, he did not intend it to be thought he was pleased with us. Little did we care, as we raced down the shingles from the mouth of the gully over yellow acres of the Ranunculad, rejoiced to see outstretched among the stones fat ferny foliage of a rue-buttercup, which, being now out of flower, I could only hope was my beautiful own new species from the Bastion Gorge, with its flowers of bland Anemone blue. A ferny blue-grey Corydal also was pushing its leaves there, and many another promise for later summer, especially of an Edelweiss that made hummocks of tight silver-white rosettes in the earth-pans, promising a beautiful contrast to the countless little purple Asters, but not

THUNDERCROWN, FROM FAR AWAY ALONG THE RIDGE, BELOW THE ROTERDSPITZE

destined to fulfil that promise, for its stars of blossom proved as dull and dingy and poor as its white plush cushions are beautiful. Ere long, however, we had descended below the level of these austere high alpines, and found ourselves in the tumbles and corrugations of tussocky moorland and wild boulder-falls that fill the valley right away down to the distant depths of the camp, yielding nothing new, and at present still in the dinginess of early spring. Luxuriating in achievement we pursued our leisurely descent, over fall after fall of the fell, and long-veiled stone-tumbles, now lumpy hills of grass, overshadowing dells where the big white Rhododendron at once made a glossy dense tangle of stunted masses. Overhead the air was clearing, and the mountain for the moment had evidently decided to make the best of a bad job. It was just afternoon when we plunged through the last and thickest dell of Rhododendrons, and came out upon the camp lying serene and inviting on the rim of the down.

In the sunlight we lounged and rested and dozed; the spectacle was too much for Thundercrown's endurance. His mood darkened into increasing showers and gathering chill glooms; and then, for the last manifestation of his feelings, there developed a most glorious ink-black storm across his heights, descending in curtains of devastating hail that veiled his affronted brow. And then it all moved on magnificently down over the valley of the Blackwater, under the vast span of a rainbow, in veils of white gloom beneath an arch of densest black, against which there stood out strips of high distant hills in palest green like living light. The ensuing cold was bitter at dusk, and intensified with the coming of the clear and frozen night. We warmed ourselves at a succession of bonfires, and at last set to and made a

very giant on the verge of the down, for its towering fires to elicit an answer from the walls of Siku. From its abysmal depths beside the Blackwater the little town saw that scarlet spark on the frontal of the fell, and understood that the mountain had been conquered; an answering twinkle on the wall told us that the message was received. In triumph we mounded the bonfire higher and higher with bushes of the big white Rhododendron which, in burning, breathes far and wide an entrancing scent of Primroses; whereas its little cousin that dapples all the downs with sturdy domes of small greying foliage, smothered in bunches of little lavender-blue flower-heads, exhales an astringent aromatic fragrance which makes one think of *Rh. anthopogon*—a resinous odour that you also find in the frail yellow floppet of the Vanishing Water gully.

Thundercrown began the morning in a fit of sullens, and we woke to find ourselves in a cold white ocean of flocculent cloud. However, ere it was long the mountain had thought better of such petulant and unprofitable displays, and the day soon cleared to glory. Very early I was off downwards with my escort, leaving the baggage to follow with Purdom when the carriers should have come up from Barley Bee. It was a nice problem as to whether they would come up or no; we were not easy as to whether the hails of Thundercrown might not have done such damage down below as effectually to discourage anybody from ever assaulting his fastnesses again, or abetting others in doing so. However, I had hardly left the camp and embarked on the long descent of the down than I saw them faithfully mounting far below to meet me. We passed the appropriate courtesies, and I proceeded on my way over the fields of the little Iris glittering in the grass. Here and there

we dipped into dells where the Spiræa was now a white surf of bending sprays among the barberries and small willows, and I was just topping the far side of one of these when I was aware of a piteous baaing and bleating in the brake behind me. In dived the retinue, and after a few minutes emerged with a tiny dappled baby musk deer, abandoned by his parents on the spur of our passing, and indiscreetly loud in his aggrievance at such desertion. For he was now tucked into the breast of the Yamun man whom Great Lord Jang had insisted on sending up with us for moral support in the mountain, and for suitable coercion, if need were, at Barley Bee. The victim made no protest; his little grey head stuck out of his bearer's décolletage like a kangaroolet's from his mother's pouch. "Mei-yu ya," said the puss-faced cook with a smile, opening the soft mouth to show me there were no teeth. I thought no ill, and hoped we might rear the orphan by hand in Siku. Unreflectingly I took on myself the perilous responsibility of interfering with another's destiny, and the increased procession continued down the slopes of the fells to Barley Bee, where I enjoyed a delicious rest in the sunshine, lying out on the flat roof with my glasses to watch the slow and microscopic procession of Purdom and the carriers on the zigzags of the vast acclivity overhead.

The coarse-haired baby deer was now released from durance, and hopped about awhile on his exaggerated hind-legs. The kitchen cats and he regarded each other with mutual surprise, and finally, being weak on his legs, he subsided to sleep. Purdom, who ere long arrived, thought it was indeed a kitten that I had introduced to the family, and was now so proudly showing him in the hope that he would be as much pleased and thrilled with the capture as myself. Not a bit

of it. He was perfectly cold about the matter, and cast the first shadow on my mood as I began to reflect on the difference between the torrid Yamun yard in Siku and the upland dells of coppice eleven thousand feet up on Thundercrown. Meanwhile we at last proceeded on the ponies, riding round the longer easier way to spare their tired sore feet from the stones of the ascent. We reached Siku in the early afternoon, and it seemed, after our days on the alpine heights, as if summer had come with a bound into the valley of the Blackwater. For now all the corn was in, and the flat stretches and terraces of culture were already being flooded with water for the rice to take its place. There was no news in the town; still no more post; nothing but blank silence all around, except that rumours came in from Lanchow that all the north was still impossible of access—a drag on our purpose of moving immediately on to the Jo-ni district now that we had done with this. But by this time nobody seemed to know whether it was the Mahomedans or the Wolves who were marauding in those parts, or both or neither or who. In any case, difficulties threatened to fetter our feet again, and it was a surprise to find Great Lord Jang, when he came in state to call and congratulate us on having successfully survived the perils of Thundercrown, so affable and acquiescent about our desire to get away north to Min-jô as soon as possible.

But hardly had he smiled and snored his consent than in came Great Man Pung, quite evidently by a preconcerted plan, and the whole colour of the conversation changed. Would we not be patient and wait a bit till the disturbances should have more thoroughly subsided ? If we would only be good and stay quiet where we were, the Great Men, in high spirits owing to all the Szechua-

nese troops having now retired to the south again, actually offered us as a bribe their permission to go west to a district called Ta Cha Ling, where many flowers were reported, but a Tibetan population so bad that hitherto the very notion of our going there had been rigidly discountenanced, even when it might have been reasonably possible to do so on the tail of the invading expedition. So that now the offer evoked no confidence, and was plainly a mere red herring designed to divert our attention from the Min-jô road while the Mandarins played us up and down with the bait of Ta Cha Ling. So little, in fact, was the March in that direction in any condition to be visited that just before the troops departed, the Tibetans quite close to Siku had dug a pit in the path and covered it over, so that a provision train with five men passing along fell through into the water with which it had been filled. Whereupon the Tibetans, from a safe distance up the hill, rolled down stones till their victims were in a sufficiently subdued condition to be handled, and then fished them out and burned them alive. So that it was quite plain we need entertain no hopes of such a district, and therefore bent all our energies instead on polite wheedlings about the Min-jô plan, until at last we compromised on the proposal that, before we made our own adventure, men from both Yamuns should go up the road at once to prospect its possibilities of peacefulness for us; foisting in with tact the vital proviso that two of our own people should accompany them, if only to see that they did not merely go to the nearest village, take a few days' rest-cure there, and then return with terrific tales of roads quite impassable. This was the best we could then achieve, and lucky enough to do so, in face of an official letter lately received from the Viceroy of Kansu directing

Great Lord Jang to convey us the thanks of His Excellency for the part we had played in the saving of Siku, and urging him on no account to allow us to stray into the slightest peril.

It was a delay, and a vexatious delay, now that summer was high and beginning to make us think about its passing over. However, we need not have troubled, and the probable procrastinations of the Mandarins were rendered unnecessary by the fact that no Yamun man from either Governor could be prevailed upon to undertake that expedition, neither by bribes nor threats of beating, seeing that they were not to have food-money for the road to supplement their stipend of something rather less than a penny a day. So it was only our own two men that set off, the Mee and a handsome fellow of Siku with doglike beautiful eyes and a touching expression of simple faithful honesty. Meanwhile the days dragged by stifling and hot and bathetic. The little deer added to my depression by dying shortly after its arrival in Siku, meekly fading away, and making me the more deplore my thoughtlessness in having torn it from the alpine heights where alone it could have been happy. The relaxation after an exploit is always a period of reaction, and nothing much in Siku now seemed of interest or profit after our long-planned and long-despaired-of conquest of Thundercrown, that had thus come off with such complete satisfaction to all parties concerned that even the mountain now wore a persistent, cloudless smile from day to day.

CHAPTER XIV

AWAY NORTHWARD

BUT the moods alike of hills and men were vicissitudinous and full of ill-omen through the ensuing leaden days, during which Thundercrown overhead sullenly stored up reprisals for the world, and, down below, the human race, overwrought by the succession of stifling heats, grew worn and fretted in its nerves. There were quarrels in the yard, and suddenly all Great Man Pung's garrison of twenty-one rag-bags went unanimously on strike, owing to anti-foreign feeling aroused by one of the parties in the dispute, who was no doubt, though of the meanest appearance, some influential member of the Elder Brother League. Anyhow, all Pung's soldiers forsook him and fled, leaving the walls and gates of Siku completely unguarded, and the vast courts of the Yamun like courts of the dead, unless when the porches became alive with gabble, Mr. Pung having angrily sent, or received, an embassage. It was a trying time to all concerned, as nobody could tell what steps the populace might now proceed to take against the unpopular Mr. Pung, left desolate and helpless, or against his guests, all memory of whose services to the city had by this time passed away. An atmosphere of plottings and secret purposes filled the place; it got to such a pitch that when I woke in the night and heard a cock crow I instantly concluded it was a conspirator badly imitating the bird.

Amid these storms there floated in and out the Great Lord Jang, colossal soft and smiling, but not well received by Mr. Pung, who attributed the late outbreak and his own powerlessness against it largely to the notorious kindliness of Mr. Jang, who, it was well known, would never let justice be carried even to such an extreme as the putting down of a few trousers here and there. In this lack of backing, lack of money, lack of authority, lack of everything, Mr. Pung saw nothing for it but to send in his resignation to the Viceroy of Lanchow, weary as he was of the useless semblance of authority on an annual ten shillings, now many seasons in arrear. And Great Lord Jang, meanwhile, coming to call on his colleague and getting no admittance, would heave into our quarters instead, attended by his hook-nosed beautiful acolyte with the water-pipe. Here he would sit and converse, emitting at intervals those long succulent soft snores which gave his chat such body and richness. He had little to say each time but to thank us for being there, and to declare that our continued presence shed an ægis of protection over the abandoned Mr. Pung, on whom otherwise there was no telling what disasters might fall. The pourparlers were long, and usually occurred at inopportune moments of photography or painting. Nothing ever seemed to be coming of them, and we rejoiced anew each time the kindly fat old gentleman drank tea, and heaved himself up and went his way with bows, followed by his train, with pipe-bearing acolyte immediately upon his heels, as beautiful as the Charioteer of Delphi, in the long straight folds of his blue gown about his slender shape, but otherwise heavy-browed, and in his dark-eyed aquiline beauty recalling (though in a much younger stage) that hook-nosed luscious official who eternally holds aside

the curtain for the great Augusta on the wall of San Vitale.

Suddenly there came a universal *détente* in all directions of the situation. The mountain was the first to break down under the strain, and his gathering mood erupted in cataclysmal deluges, followed by a relaxation of temperature and atmosphere, very delicious to appreciate as one sat out under the arcade and listened to the green splashings in the yard. Towards evening the darkness broke, and there were violent emerald flares of sunlight on the eastern hills, and a glorious rainbow above all, watered at the base in opalescent milky refractions of dun-coloured cloud. Straight upon this scene came out Mr. Pung in the highest spirits, owing to a State letter newly arrived from the Viceroy announcing that foreign troops had arrived in China to take charge of the situation—a document either invented or completely untrue, but of much weight in determining the attitude of the populace, to whom it was to be read aloud in full state the next day. (It never was, however, for they never came.) However, the situation did seem to be clearing, and the next event was one more immediately personal to ourselves.

For now came in a long-belated letter from Mr. Christie, the missionary of the northern Border, giving us authentic news of the White Wolf's doings in Min-jô and Tao-jô, but urging us promptly to move up in that direction, assuring us of open roads and quiet country, and the Prince of Jo-ni asking nothing better than to do all in his power to serve us, in apology for what his subjects of Chago had attempted against us, and thereby brought him in a dangerous disrepute with the Viceroy. This was a lightning-flash of comfort and certainty in the darkness of our plans, and we decided

accordingly to go northward at once, and not await the return of our messengers. Instant preparations were set on foot, and the local wires got stirring, and the eventful day concluded in a rapture of relief.

The white horse was ill, and the problem of securing mules was difficult. Mr. Jang sent over to commandeer them from Ga-Hoba, but such piteous pleas came back about the getting in of the crops that other sources of supply had to be sought for, and for awhile I had doubts as to whether gentle old Lord Jang might not, after all, be playing with us again to procrastinate our going, convinced and relieved though he professed to have been on hearing Mr. Christie's letter. However, though a state of arrested hope is trying, we have it on good authority (apropos of the joys of heaven—"a-blowing of them long trumpets, and a-pickin' at little 'arps") that "there's few things as can't be bore with, if took patient." The illness of the poor white horse was another matter, and called for all the resources of veterinary craft, English and Chinese. Soap was administered in various manners, and the Chinese cut the whites of its eyes till its meek face presented a piteous spectacle, and lit cauteries of joss-sticks on its groin, while the patient himself, under the instinct of pain, had got into the manger, and there lay cradled on his back with all four legs in the air. No remedies answered, and the next day he was still worse. They had got him out of the manger, and kept him in the yard. He was yet further pestered in his pains by people who would not, very wisely, let him lie down, as he wanted, and sink into the hopelessness of coma. But if it is a misery to go on standing upon two legs when one is ill, how much more dreadful it must be to have to go on standing upon four! It was with heartfelt

relief at last that I saw him so far recovered as to eat. The question of shooting him or leaving him behind now vanished; he would probably be able to accompany the caravan, though at his own pace and without burden of any kind.

Bellona now sent forth her blasts to enliven us. The next day burst forth an appalling difference of opinion between the Mesdames Pung. Mrs. Pung the younger, having taken a displeasure at Mrs. Pung of the purse, began to scream; and for five hours she went on steadily screaming at the very top of her voice, with hardly a moment's intermission. We had a good insight into what passion really means in "unemotional China," and how wise are the Chinese to discourage it. Alarums and excursions succeeded each other. Again and again the victim, wall-eyed pasty-faced and frightful, came surging out into our yard in a convulsion of new grievances and yells, pavidly restrained by such few domestics as still remained in the household, who would now and then head off her more indecorous darts in our direction, and hustle her with compassionate respectfulness towards her own quarters. Mrs. Pung of the money meanwhile made no sign; but through the door of the yard the Great Man himself could occasionally be descried on the watch, brooding with an intent ferocity of fury from his seat. Occasionally he would give a cat-like spring upon the screamer, and, without a word, endeavour to manipulate her into better sense, with the result that she only screamed and sobbed the more frantically.

Not that he was often allowed to come to actual grips with her. The feline leap from his chair was sign enough, and a timid servant, or our Mafu, would intervene and march him back again in perfect meekness, his fell purposes reduced by the mere touch of reason

to quiescence. Finally the scene died down into exhaustion, and a complete silence filled the *ménage*. Mrs. Pung the younger, in fact, had to take to her bed and convalesce after the storm, assisted by confidential matrons from the town, and by a magnificent old jolly Tibetan lady from Lodanee, in baggy blue trousers and a sort of Bretonne blue linen coif, with her hair plaited into two enormous long tresses looped almost to her heels with coins and charms, while in front, almost to her toes, there swung and swayed a glittering cascade of successive silver chains, with charms and turquoises to match those that hung on huge silver rings at her ears. There was quite a music and a glinting when this powerful person came striding up the yard, her big ruddy face a-twinkle with smiles.

The next preface to our ripening departure was the news that more Szechuanese soldiers were coming back the next day, having eaten out Kiai-jô. What they hoped to find in yet hungrier Siku nobody knew, and we grew more anxious to be off before these famished guests should arrive and fall to robbing. Another letter also came from Mr. Christie telling us the full tale of the fall of Min-jô and Tao-jô, with all the wickedness of the Wolves, and the massacres they had made. Now they seemed to have vanished, no doubt having fled again down the western roads and been dispersed. We could but hope we might have no untimely meeting with any fragments of their army as we followed up its track to the north on the last and most apparently perilous stage of our journey (to judge by popular terrors and the absolute emptiness of all the highways). Mules, however, were now actually promised, and the start seemed really drawing near. Purdom went in, accordingly, for a final interview with the Great Man Pung

to give him our best thanks for all his kindness. He was almost immediately followed back into our yard by the Great Man himself, agog with news. For, squatting close to us in the dark beneath the arcade, he told us in secret whispers the tale of the official letter he had that day received from the Viceroy of Kansu. Incidentally it ignored his resignation and the strike of the garrison, but blandly urged him to continue in office, and promised to send him a modicum of money to that end. However, its chief point, and the one that reduced Mr. Pung to those awe-stricken whispers, was that no longer was the official document couched in terms of the Chinese Republic; it had reverted to the style and formula of the bygone Emperors of the Ming line before ever the hated Manchus were heard of. There was no choice but to believe that the Dragon Throne had been hauled from its brief seclusion in the lumber-room of history, and that Yuan Shih Kai was duly following the current of the Imperial destiny which had long been seeming so inevitable. And though this was only a false alarm, perhaps a mere *ballon d'essai*, it was the first news we had of the President's entrance on his rapid progress of the next eighteen months towards the Celestial Seat.

With this news buzzing in our ears we rose to that sad sixth of July which was to see us leaving Siku for the north. The morning was, as usual on a first start, interminable. Into the middle of the bargainings and adjustments and clamourings came the Great Lord Jang on a State visit of farewell, looking very summery in a white coat and skirt of green grass-silk. His good-byes were brief, as custom bids. Much friendliness passed, and he chuckled in long soft gurgling snores of satisfaction over the photographs we had made of him

and Great Man Pung, though in point of fact he himself had so shaken with the agitations of terror in the process as quite to blur the plate; while Great Man Pung, perched on the back of his seat of justice, and busy scrambling into Purdom's riding-breeches to give himself more of an up-to-date military look, had in point of fact never more closely resembled a barrel-organ monkey perched on his post.

Great Lord Jang further reported that the newly arrived troops showed themselves so far orderly and amiable; he also confirmed from his paper the news of the night before, adding that all official styles and titles and designations of offices were now to revert to the precedents of the Ming Empire. After which, in many a low bow on the successive thresholds of the yards, he took his leave and departed, shortly followed by myself on Spotted Fat, with the sickly but convalescent white horse trailing along naked before me in charge of one of the soldiers deputed to escort us to Min-jô. Great Man Pung saw me off from the outermost gate of his hospitable Yamun, and away down the cobbled street beneath the heavy shade of the Acacias I rode through the assembled crowds, exchanging bows with all our friends, and wistful in the idea of thus bidding farewell, perhaps for ever, to a little place so pleasant, that had been so timely a harbour for us in time of trouble. Purdom followed soon after with the train, which seemed able so far as the mules went, and satisfactory as far as the men.

Up and along round the huge buttresses of the loess downs by which Siku is so securely defended on the east we slowly wound and dipped, then down the long, barren valley, blazing in the heat of afternoon, until we reached Nain Dzai, which was to be our short first

day's stage. Nain Dzai was very different now in aspect, for all the terraced ledges of its roofs were to-day railed and fenced with racked shocks of corn that turned the village to a flat-tiled roof of gold clothing the hillock. On one of these roofs we pitched our beds, and the friendly inhabitants, now released from the fears of war and robbers, came crowding to see us. My gold teeth had such a success that all the old patriarchs of the place had to be fetched up from their beds to be shown the marvel. But at last it was evening. We banished all intruders, and set to our dinner on that flat expanse of beaten mud among the railed corn-stooks; sat out a little in the balmy warm wind of early night to look back at Thundercrown filling the far-off head of the Blackwater Valley with his magnificence; and on the various slopes and cliffs we now knew so well; and then to bed under the canopy of stars.

We were all damp with dew when the lovely new day aroused us betimes for the start. Across the bridge we returned again to the bank by which we had descended from Siku, and thence away eastwards down the Blackwater Valley still, over a wild stony land like that of the higher reaches, but perhaps yet hotter and wilder and stonier, with the Blackwater roaring much more savagely below in terrible races and rapids among vast boulders, where his riven volume pours and boils in a tempest. We kept on meeting detachments of Szechuanese soldiers coming up to Siku, and ultimately Colonel Li himself in a white palanquin, who passed us the time of day and told us that our late patient was now almost entirely recovered, happily at home in Cheng-tu. After this the track dips into more fertile levels, still desperately stony, indeed, but with the stones largely piled into massive accumulations of walling along the edges of

the culture-patches, so that here, among the crops, the persimmon comes to its full magnificemce. And after a few miles of this we suddenly say good-bye to the Blackwater.

With dramatic abruptness the Nan Hor (South River) sweeps down into the Blackwater at right angles from the north, having cut its way straight through the last caudal vertebræ of the fading Min S'an. On either side rise up in heights almost unimaginable from below, of precipice and hot arid grass slope, the cloven flanks of the Great Ridge; down in the depth advances the Nan Hor, rivalling the Blackwater in ugliness, though in different lines. For while the Blackwater is the colour of an elderly warship, the Nan Hor is like the brightest diarrhœa. At the point of intersection the glowing russets of the Nan Hor curve far out into the sombre dirt of the Blackwater; but they are soon merged in a general filthiness that leaves the Blackwater no different at Kiai-jô, three days' journey down its course, from what it was at Siku.

Here it is that you leave the big river, then, diverging straight northward along the steep and torrid bare slopes that overhang the Nan Hor delta. In a little while you must traverse the most perilous and agitated bridge I know in all those parts—a rotting arch of brushwood, already skew-eyed, that trembles convulsively and sways beneath the lightest footfall; after which the Kiai-jô road goes right back again down the other bank of the Nan Hor to the Blackwater, while the northern highway continues upwards. The roads were clearly awakening to life again; for though we did not meet our own men returning from Min-jô, there was abundance of traffic, and long trains of medicine-laden mules descending, reporting, by words as w

as presence, that the northerly districts were once more pacified and capable of approach.

The greying day turned windy, chilly, dark, and wet, as we followed the coilings of the Nan Hor up between the hills. The stage concluded with a long slope amid scrub and coppice beneath a high hillside. Here I had my last sight of the golden rose, now passed over into the state of dark round berries. And then ahead of us, beyond a beautiful quiet grave-coppice, plumy with magnificent old specimens of Celtis that tower up from a surf of honeysuckles, we came into view of what looked like the rich and comfortable village of Kwan-ting. Kwan-ting it was, indeed, but the Wolf had had his way with its riches and comfort, and now the place was a tragic waste of charred burned wreckage —a most sad sight in the weeping, quiet dusk. All the inns had been destroyed, and half the inhabitants had fled, and not yet returned from their refuges in the hills to which they had so hardly attained, the Wolves wantonly shooting at them as they made off up the slopes, and accounting for some twenty victims, either so or in the village itself. However, we found a willing host who still had a house in which to play the part, and there settled in for the night, the dark and the wet being now too oppressive for us to go down and play in the dense boskets of the Variable Buddleia with which the wide white shingle-stretches of the Nan Hor are here filled.

The Variable Buddleia is usually very poor in type throughout these Northern Marches, though most abundant in the lower regions, and especially in the stony drifts of the rivers; but from this point for two days northward it takes a beautiful form: slender and graceful, and with spikes that cannot possibly compare

for fatness, indeed, with those of the Magnificent variety, but which are even much longer, and very striking in their abundance and waving cat's-tail length of blossom, in a much redder, richer, warmer tone of colour than the soft violets of the typical Variable Buddleia as we know it at home—hardly to be recognised, indeed, with its ample leafage and stout spikes, for the same species as this elegant shrub, with fine narrow foliage completely subordinate to the effect of its profuse and elongated tails of glowing blossom. Very often, too, in the most starving places of the stones, the plant becomes dwarfed, all but the flower, and the foliage becomes quite minute and of a soft silvery whiteness, which contrasts beautifully with the unusually clear pinkness of the spikes. One special little bush had leaves so narrow and tiny that I even suspected that here might be a hybrid with *B. alternifolia*, and, failing of seed, tried hard to get living cuttings across the frozen world. But the attempt failed, and distinct as are these Buddleia forms of the Nan Hor, I am still left wondering whether in cultivation the species may not justify its name, and lose the distinct loveliness of these in the general type of the species as it appears in the fat soil of gardens.

The next day we passed up through the gorges of the Nan Hor, where the river carves its way deep down in the actual spine of the dying Min S'an. A strange passage it is, and suggestive of innumerable scenes in Chinese pictures that one had hitherto imagined mere wanton fantasy. Ricketty galleries of brushwood, perilous with gaps, are propped out on beams over the surging mud of the river, and along these one winds deep in cañons of beetling precipices overhead, in the caves and crannies of which (for almost the last time

THE NORTH GATE OF KWAN-TING

going north) you see the lodged coffins of the stranger; and in the largest grotto of all, at a racing furious bend, a stately shrine, to which you ascend by stairs, is lodged in the shallow cavern. It is best to trust no feet but your own, though, on these chancy roads built out from the face of the cliff to which they so imperfectly adhere. They vibrate beneath your tread, and in places the trodden mud and brushwood have given way, and you look down into the hungry surf of the Nan Hor, wondering what would happen if your horse put his foot in, forgetting that your horse is quite as capable of seeing and appreciating perils as yourself, and at least as well able to dispose his four feet as you your two. However, with Spotted Fat, indeed, of the defective eyesight, this was not true, so that my precautions were not unfounded; to say nothing of the fact that the sharp turnings of the cliff and the narrowness of the track really do not admit of reasonable riding.

The gloomy splendour of the gorges at last widens out into a comparatively open ghyll, with ribs of scrub-clad precipice descending on you from the right, the track having crossed the river by a high-spanned bridge just where you emerge from the narrows of the ravine beneath a pleasant little perched village called Tung-Tung, with big square houses that have drawn some of their inspiration from the big castle-boxes of Tibet. More ups and downs beneath the cliffs, and soon you come to a rather ruinous little gatehouse over the road, which tells you that here you pass from the Governorship of Great Lord Jang of Siku into that of his confrère at Min-jô. The valley is still precipitous and stony and wild, but ahead of you now appear lower hills and an opener look of country, as you begin to emerge towards the northern side of the range. Here, on the crags that

descend to the river through a scanty vesture of scrub, the track, as it climbs and clings along their face and rounds its successive buttresses, brings you into sight of two beauties that haunt the crannied combes. In mats of dark emerald grass flopping in a wiry tangle from the ledges the Kansu Snakesbeard now takes the scene, and in July is busily displaying its many stems of six inches or so, crowned with short spires of stars that look as if carved of pure ivory very faintly flushed with lavender-rose, and are followed in due time by round black berries so beautiful in a bloom of blue that they look like little grapes. Only at this one point, in my first season, did I see this Ophiopogon, probably here at its farthest westerly extension, like several other species of this region, which really have their centre in the south-eastern part of the province, and abound, like the Snakesbeard, the Blood Hawthorn, and the Barley Bee rose, all down the foothills of South Kansu from Tsin-jô over the borders of Shensi, Hupeh, and Szechuan. The other treasure is the hygrometric Bœa, so called because, when parched, she curls up happily into a ball of shrivelled deadness like any Jerusalem rose, and then, when the rain comes, unfurls again into a lovely flattened star of silver-sheening foliage, just like that of *Jankœa Heldreichii*, plastered against the faces of the cliffs and crannies; and is now, in the precipitous ghylls above the Nan Hor, letting loose her flights of little pale-purple streptocarpus flowers, that hover so delicately above the rosettes, and provide so delicious a colour-contrast with their glittering shimmering silveriness.

After this the valley widens out, and the track continues along the right-hand side of the river along big downs of scrub, in which a few weeks later will be blazing

the blood-scarlet burdens of *Cratægus crenulata*, in habit stark and angular and thorny as a Hippophaë which has donned a dense load of bunched holly-berries in a yet more violent note of red all along its stiff and spiky boughs. But the Blood Hawthorn, like the Snakesbeard, is fading out here—one plant alone above Barley Bee had already excited us—but the species has its real and inordinate abundance down over the Kansu borders, well into the middle of Szechuan at the least. In the shingly valley-bottoms, too, and the pebbled stretches that begin to intervene between the arms and runnels into which the river now begins to split, the Variable Buddleia is richer and of a rosier purple than ever; while over the stones lie mounded heaps of that ubiquitous Clematis of these parts which rejoices in the name of *C. orientalis tangutica obtusiuscula*, but, despite this rebuffing multiplicity of titles, remains a beautiful and desirable thing, which I shall in future talk of more succinctly as the Golden Bell, on account of its innumerable blossoms that hang in the mass like big Fritillaries of pure unchequered gold, or often ring out their chimes to the tops of the small trees in the lower alpine woodland of the border, though more especially addicted to river shingles, where they turn, later into the year, into by far the most beautiful and wild whirligigs of snowy silk that even this Struwelpeter Family produces.

Now begins a piece of road that is nearly always a trial and a trouble. You are out of the Min S'an by now, and the country is open and dull, with the valley grown much wider, and the hills steadily dumpier. On one side they are terraced to the top, with little dark-roofed, Italian-looking villages snuggling down below above the river on shelves of culture yellow with the ripening

corn. Where there is no tillage the fells, warm and dry, are thinly clothed in scrub. On the far side Armand's pine is common for almost the last time, and along the track occasionally stand up the stiff, privet-like bushes of *Leptodermis oblonga*, now beautiful with their loose, lilac-like thyrses of lilac-like (but five-pointed) lavender stars, till you might swear you were indeed in front of a small and well-flowered shrub of Persian lilac. But these idyllic contemplations are soon arrested by the problems of the way.

Here the vale is big and flat; the river accordingly splits into a dozen channels and many more, with long stretches of shingle in between. The usual direction is to cross it, fording the currents which their very number makes shallow; and then to continue up the far bank, to recross again higher up. But when the river is in flood, as often happens in summer, the path continues along the right-hand side by the face of the fell. Not only is it a most discouraging path in itself, being exceedingly narrow and slippery, with violent ups and downs and ins and outs, and vertiginous depths of mud-cliff falling away below to the river, but on the slightest provocation whole slabs and slices of it slide away bodily to the Nan Hor, and there is nothing for it but to wait while the breach of continuity is repaired. The whole hillside, in fact, is very bare and arid, clothed largely in the blue Onosma, and composed of grit and gravel and loess. Bare as it is, the rains continue tearing it into the most insecure and precipitous gullies, that are always having their shape changed by each successive deluge, which undermines the pinnacles piecemeal, and soaks the degringolating faces till they melt away in muddy ruin to the river.

And this is what had happened on the present occasion.

Quite neat and nice the track wandered in and out a little way along the flank of the hillside, and then came to a dead stop where a naked ravine had been washed completely clean of all possibility of passage, leaving only converging cliffs of mud sinking sheer to the river. Beyond this it was evident that there were more and worse breaks in the continuity of the way. It was nothing that here and there we could catch glimpses of level and practicable stretches of path round distant buttresses, for what avails even the broadest of motor roads, when interspersed with faces of raw crude mud-cliff, such as were evident, in all their newness after the spring floods, along the frontage of the steep slope that here overhangs the water? Many and desperate were the attempts we made to achieve the fords; but even the smaller channels near the shore proved quite impassable in depth and current, nor could any way be found of getting along the water's edge at the foot of the high mud-cliffs. There was no help for it. Reluctant peasants were commandeered to what must be a familiar *corvée*, and set to repairing the breaches of the road, while we sat by and devoured our souls in patience. Like furies they set to work, bridging the crevasses in the convergence of each precipitous chine with a bough or two, and then hacking forth loess from the bank to beat out upon the brushwood; and next, having secured that bridge with stones, hewing a ledge along each face of the cliff.

The caravan halted and browsed and waited; the afternoon wore on golden, accompanied by my gratitude that in China there is no such thing as time. Suddenly round a distant bend ahead of us a fluttering figure came running. It proved to be the Mee, his frog-like face alight with that radiant air of devotion which he so well

knew how to assume, and to which his frightfulness was so favourable. At a more leisurely pace he was followed by the dog-eyed devotee from Siku. They brought good news of the state of the country up north, and then, squatting down beside the path, actually unfolded my first budget of letters for many a month past, the first word I had had of my friends since leaving Tsin-jô. This diversion gloriously broke the back of the day's weariness, and I strolled along ahead of the caravan in high glee over these remote communications that snatched me back into fair and precious *tête-à-têtes* across the world, as I laboriously—and rather absent-mindedly over my letters—picked my way along the slants of the collapsing cliffs, until the exigencies of the situation made me fold up all my papers and pocket them for the time, and devote my whole energies to accomplishing the traverse without disaster. On the far side, however, of the difficult stretch I came upon a promontory beside a village, where, on the edge of a glowing cornfield, I was able to sit awhile and absorb my news while the caravan caught up. After this the way was not so difficult, though beyond the village there came a baffling uncertainty of route. Finally we continued up over a flat length of luxuriant fields between hedgerows to the flat and coppiced shingle-stretches beside the river, and so persevered, making no attempt on the obvious other path high up along the face of the downs overhead, until at last a headland jutting out into a swirl of the Nan Hor made it necessary for us to climb the steep ascent that here toiled up to join the main path above; after which the way continued uneventful, with a sort of Sunday afternoon feeling in the balmy, golden air, through cornfields reclaimed from the river-shingle, till, turning a corner, we came into a

THE BROKEN TRACK ABOVE THE RIVER, LOOKING SOUTH TO THE NAN-HOR GORGES

convenient village glowing in the sundown, and there, on the urging of the muleteers, worn out with the vicissitudes of the day, decided to halt for the night, instead of proceeding on to Tan Shang. There was no accommodation here, it was true, for the place was so poor and insignificant as not even to have attracted the voracity of the Wolves. However, we soon came to terms with an amenable old lady, and to the astonishment of the whole hamlet proceeded to encamp on the flat roof, instead of preferring the one small, grimy room which was all they could proffer for our reception.

The morning was cloudless and quite chill after a sweet night of sleep, from which I woke to find all the coverlids yet more dripping wet with dew than after the night at Nain Dzai. Up the valley we proceeded. From this point onward it is for the present smooth and smug and cultivated, exactly like the scenery of the Rhine, though much larger and more serene. Round bay after bay of the placid river the road meandered under embosoming placid hills, growing wider and smoother as it went, till at last there were stretches of a few yards here and there on which it would have been possible to wheel a pram without disaster; while down in the sweeps of the river there were wide plains of sand and fine turf, across which one could cut for once at a heartening canter. The dramatic moment of the day came near its close, for as we continued among the dull downs that here expand about the Nan Hor, suddenly a little beck came in to join it at right angles from the south. And there, very far away down in the distance, surmounting heights of alpine forest, rose a tremendous mass of limestone precipices high into the sky. It was the northern face of Thundercrown, here for the first and only time visible, at the head of its watercourse.

So long did it seem we had been travelling in these mere three days, and over a road so arduous, that the apparition gave one quite the thrill of seeing an old friend, and it was difficult to believe that down on the far side of that bulk lay Siku basking beside the Blackwater, and Mr. Pung having words with one or other of his wives.

But the sudden vision soon passed, and nearer hills closed in upon the valley of that little beck. Now we climbed beneath a ruddy line of cliffs, and then continued the long course of wide level bays of cultivated land above the windings of the Nan Hor. All this immediate piece of country is the special territory of the Weeping Buddleia, which, occasional and obviously a culture plant about Nain Dzai and Siku, as well as above Tan Shang (where it becomes very rare and soon ceases), here weeps in cascades of purple along all the hedgerows as you thread the comfortable cornlands. Tan Shang itself consists of a semicircle of street with prosperous houses, and then of a long profound avenue of dirt between hovels in a smiling angle of converging valleys. Here the Tibetan Prince, Ma Tusa, has his seat in a citadel embowered with trees above the town, and being so far into China, with his chief possessions so far away on the Border and over it, must needs be a well-conducted person on pain of confiscation. We did not, however, linger in courtesies to this potentate, the lord (it will be remembered) of Wu-Ping and the little monastery impending over Ga-Hoba, but continued up the left-hand valley in the bed of the Nan Hor, now dwindled to a mere divided shadow of its former self as we approach the small ruddy range in which a dozen glens give birth to streams that are eventually to become the Nan Hor below Tan Shang. The bed of the branch followed by

the Min-jô road is flat and long and stony before it begins to rise out of the valley. Here the road gives you the chance of resting to eat lunch beneath the shade of a huge umbrageous tree on a knoll above a tumbled village, looking back down towards Tan Shang over all the pleasant valley of the stream.

On you now go, steadily winding and curling upwards to the left, the way varying between arid stretches over the shingles of lateral becks and coppiced glens and small sacred woods of holm-oak, giving a thin, dappled shade over the bare ground beneath. It is a long climb, gradual and uneventful, towards the crest of a pass over these hills, the watershed of the Nan Hor, towards the northerly valleys in the direction of Min-jô. The glens grow more and more picturesque and lush with copse, though yielding no new species, till at last the final ascent begins, and you toil steeply and diagonally up the hillside, the soil being now of a quite startling redness. The actual col is too low, and in country too undistinguished and shut in to give any splendour of view; but the descent on the far side is beautiful and almost alpine in effect, dropping down huge open grassy slopes all pale-yellow with multitudes of tall louseworts, except where it was a sea of blue-violet with a curious bristly-carpelled Aconitish affair, which is widely grown in Western China for medicine, and here, though only an annual, gives an even bluer depth of glory to the meadows than does the field Salvia to those violet undulations of colour on the way up from Predazzo to the Rolle Pass.

Indeed, the whole scene took one back to the Alps, and made one think of many an ecstatic moment on the Elizabethstrasse. Down along the slopes all stained with purple, or moonlit in drifts of saffron yellow, we

proceeded gradually towards the river valley far beneath, where it was necessary to ford a deep and violent stream before mounting to a village on the far side, whence a broad and comely white road, looking almost capable of carriages for the moment, wound away northward for us to follow through the windings of the hills; and down the valley southward it also proceeded, no less evident and fine, towards Tibet and the gigantic amassed ranges of snow and ice that filled the distant horizon on our left as we sadly turned the shoulder above the village and proceeded straight away from them, as destiny bade. The road was indeed princely for these parts, undulating round the curving bays of the hills above the stream; it was quite thick that afternoon with light carts of hay and brushwood, lumbering and bumping along its surface on their two enormous wheels made of bent birch-boughs forced into a circle, macerated for a winter in water, and so forged at last into quite efficient cart-wheels.

These tumbled little red ranges at the head of the Nan Hor Valley have, in fact, another importance than in being the watershed of the only river that cuts its way down through the end of the Min S'an and flows southward ultimately to the Yang dze Jang. For they are also, so to speak, the watershed between the northern and the southern scenery. At this point you leave the cultivated lands of Kansu; you leave the country of intricate downs and hillsides clothed in dry scrub; you leave the country of violent contrasts between blazing desert valleys and alpine uplands, the hot warm lands of drought-loving bush and herbage; and you enter on the huge austere landscapes of the north, cold, open, treeless, wide-expanded, and high. Henceforth the hills lie out at their ease, instead of being cramped

and corrugated; they are now enormous smooth fells of emerald pasture, not rain-torn naked steeps, but bland and comforting to the eye, and with a curious suggestion of being very high, without in the least looking it. As you move northward, in fact, you get more and more the impression of ascending gradually but surely to the roof of the world, with the sky pressing close like a lid on the shallow hollows between the green rolling hills. It is a wonderful open panorama, naked and wide and calm, with culture only in the broad flat beds of the rivers, where the reclaimed shingles glow in summer, in sheet over sheet over sheet of golden corn as far up the distance as the eye can see, while in September the glow of gold is replaced by blushing miles of buckwheat.

The change is not, of course, quite so abrupt as this, but it becomes strongly felt the moment you have crossed the Red Pass out of the region where the Nan Hor has its cradle. From the ford the road ascends past a village on a shoulder, where once more, and for the first time since we left Kwan-ting, there were signs that the Wolf had again really lost his temper, instead of sacking and burning capriciously here and there without ill-feeling. After this the way wound to the right, round and up and round and up, very gently ascending in a series of long bays of level cornfield, between hills growing lower, rarer, and more widely apart as we mounted, while far behind us lay unfurled a glorious distance of snowy alps in the south. Very far away now, though, lay our road from any such delights, in a tranquil country huge and bare. At last we debouched upon an upland plain, with more than ever the feeling of being in a level on the top of the world, for the rare little enclosing hills seemed high

and yet shallow, no more than green convolutions and crumples round the upland, cultivated on their flanks. The plain was filled with stretches of green corn, rich in the blue and golden light of early evening; and films of blueness floated on its farther edge, where Karta-pu lay ensconced in trees, and was now beginning to light its evening fires. The whole scene had a wonderful impression of opulence and bland Sabbath peace. Karta-pu, however, did not live up to the possibilities suggested by its picture from afar, for it is a big, straggling, tumbledown place of no special charm. Here the Wolf had wrought curiously little damage, an omission probably to be accounted for by the fact that here he must have recruited such an army of helpers as to have had friends in every house. For Karta-pu is a notorious danger-spot on this northward road—as, indeed, is also Tan Shang, though not to the same extent—being a noted nest of Elder Brothers and villains generally, by no means averse from slitting the throats and purses of the passer-by. No doubt, then, that these hearty companions flocked in multitudes to the congenial banner of the Wolf, in hopes to share the harrying of Min-jô and Tao-jô.

The long day died at last in a glorious sunset, amid diapered little flocculent clouds of clear gold that turned in time to pink and bronze. We found quarters without trouble in the big empty corn-loft above the living-rooms of an inn, disturbed only by the moans of a sick woman shut up in a sort of confessional at one side of the room, from which she would sometimes emerge distraught, and wander round and lament and flop about on the swept-up heaps of hay. We were not asked to help her, and it would have been so contrary to all etiquette to offer advice unasked, that had we

done so we might have taken rank with the turtle, that dysphemious beast who has forgotten the Eight Rules of Propriety, and has thereby provided the Chinese with the worst and most unpardonable insult of all the many in his language. Apart from this lack, however, the old landlord and his handsome wife were all that was friendly, and brought up the hope of the family to pay us his respects in the hay-loft. He was about two, a solemn and self-possessed small person, and perfect master of decorum.

But he knew neither shyness nor fear, and prattled round us as free as free, and asked questions, and offered us the customary shake of intimacy, and added very greatly, in fact, to the amenities of the evening. The Far East, of course, is the very paradise of children; and where Western civilisation has at length blossomed into overworked societies for the prevention of cruelty to them, the East, in its ignorance, has never arrived at conceiving that such a thing could be conceivable. Yet, of all Far Eastern countries, perhaps, wise and ancient China is the best of mothers to her little hopes. Absurd superstitions reign about the felicity of children in Japan, where they are supposed never to cry—a myth lately revived by a writer who travelled in Western China, and apparently disliked everything he saw there except the dead beasts he'd slaughtered and the mountains he did it on. Now, in point of fact, in few countries do children cry more loud and long than in Japan. Not, indeed, that this damages the genuine reputation of Japan for kindliness to her successors, but all these sentimental generalities are rubbish, and in many points Japanese child-nurture falls far short of the excessive tenderness that reigns in China. The child, for instance, in Japan is the affair of the womenfolk, and men of age

and quality would not be seen dandling babies down the open street; whereas the most typical scene in China is old old Lao Da-da sitting out in the sun, proud and happy with his latest grandchild in his lap, and the others playing round him. Very reverend is old age in China—where they lack, indeed, the civilising and progressive spirit that shunts the worn-out to the work-house—and yet more reverence accrues to it when blessed with the care and the comfort of the young. The two extremes meet, and there is something almost august about the calm and smiling greybeard with the family baby in his arms.

For the son of the house, indeed, it is that this tenderness is especially deployed. Girls, as everywhere, are here of quite inferior value—mere guests, who will some day marry out of the house, and in no case contribute much in return for their cost of keep. But the Chinese is essentially kindly and domestic in temper, and the lot of girls in a decent home is not unhappy, though her brothers, it is true, enjoy an inviolable felicity in strong contrast with her own lot of insignificance and work. Boys in China are kings of their household; they must not be contradicted, scolded, brought up short in any way. They are so inexpressibly precious and cherished that everything has to give way to them, and when you hear a child cry you may be fairly certain it is some microscopic lord of creation yelling the house down for his own way, and sure to get it. At the least hint of making such a piece of work his sister would be cuffed into silence and "showed 'er place plain;" but nobody must go counter to the boy. The odd thing is that this early life of indulgence, so absolute that it would spell inevitable ruin to the European, turns out the Chinese boy, as soon as he opens his eyes upon the real world,

as patient, hard-working, and amenable as you would have imagined it would make him exactly the reverse; and from the daily life of the Chinese, and the way he lives it, you could never form a notion that his babyhood and first years had passed in a process of being consistently spoiled. He is not even, like little Anna Weston, disagreeable in infancy, only to correct himself as he grows older. Life and his own sense correct him in very good time, and it would seem that if you have to deal with a race that is wise and sensible at heart, a preface of undiluted indulgence in the beginning forms no such bad prologue and no such corrupting preparation for the grey drama that is adult life, harder and greyer for the average Chinese than even for most others in the world.

It is well they have so gay a start in life, these children. Every hamlet swarms with them, and there are few contrasts more marked than between some Chinese village, swarming with happy little dirty babies tumbling over each other in the gutters, and never bothered about their urgent need of pocket-handkerchiefs, and its Tibetan neighbour, dour and empty and silent, with only a rare hope of the future here and there, any house being fortunate to have one, while in China to have no more than four is to be under the fashion. Not but that the Powers that Be are jealous of children in China as everywhere else, and the nursery superstitions of Christian Europe have their counterparts in the East. Boys, to cheat the simple malignity of the Evil Ones, are dressed as girls, or chains are put about their necks as if they were criminals; but, above all, the baby always wears, like our little friend of Karta-pu, an eared baby-bunting bonnet, sewn and embroidered to represent the mask of a tiger if looked down on from above; so

that the jealous gods, despecting, see a beast and not a baby, and pass it by accordingly.

The same crystalline glory of weather held on the morrow. We made courteous farewells to Monsieur le Bébé, and gave him an empty box that had held meat lozenges, by which he was highly but solemnly delighted, and, knowing his little manners, went immediately on his knees for us and beat his forehead respectfully upon the floor. After which we set out from Karta-pu in the chill hours of earliest morning, with a swollen moon paling in the west. Iridescent clouds of dew rose up from the steaming distances of corn in the first shafts of sunrise, and the shallow hills were of misty green with deep folds of powdery blue shadow. We followed the trail on and up, perpetually leftwards, seeming to rise slowly still nearer and nearer to the summit and consummation of all things. Finally we reached the uppermost coil of the valley, and had outstretched before us a vast selection of those dish-cover downs so dear to the heart of C. J. Holmes, in effect curiously recalling the fells of Upper Teesdale, but that here the colouring is a calm and universal green, without any northern greens or purple tones of mountain moorland. These, however, were at hand, for now we ascended sharply out of the valley-head, winding up a steep slope to the right, by a pleasant-perched pink temple on a spur with big trees about it, and so made our way upwards into a high glen between the hills.

Abruptly came the change. The bare hot loess banks above the temple along the shoulder of the down had been a flickering scarlet fire of the Slender-leaved Lily arising from a bushy surf of lilac Aster. Now we turn the corner, and ahead of us, till it loses itself in a coign

THE RISING GENERATION IN TIBET

of the moors, stretches a typical North English mountain valley, with beck and all complete. And immediately, for the first time, the Tibetan Androsace begins to appear on the hillsides, forming mats in the open loess hummocks along by the path; thenceforth to occupy all the open, hot lowlands of the loess throughout all these parts, away up beyond the Koko-Nor and the Da Tung, where it sheets the cropped warm lawns of Tien Tang in a shimmer of pink, and flows down the naked gravelly banks in such cascades of rippling crimson that from afar you think of *Saxifraga oppositifolia* in the walls of Penyghent. But in these parts, if rumour is true (for I was too late to see its flowers in this first season), it is of colder nature, and clothes the emerald downs about Min-jô in a vesture of drifted snow in June.

Between the folds of the sombre-coloured moorland fells I wandered on beside the beck, dreaming of *Primula farinosa* in just such other places far across the world, and thinking it now high time, in a place so propitious, to come upon another Primula of the same tastes. And lo! there at my feet, strayed into the river shingles, suddenly does actually appear *Primula farinosa* herself, magnified almost out of recognition. It was not, however, the Pretty Bird-e'en in very person, but a Tibetan cousin, *P. conspersa*, which neither in habits nor in habit differs by a hair breadth in the gardener's eye, unless that she is rather taller and larger, and always with several tiers of blossom one above another, producing a fine effect.* Exactly like *P. farinosa* does *P. conspersa* grow in the damp, marish folds of the fell-side, and in the spongy turf-levels beside the

* Yet in cultivation *P. conspersa* not only becomes heartily perennial, but so enormously much larger than *P. farinosa* as almost to merge in *P. gemmifera*.

mountain rills. Like *P. farinosa*, too, *P. conspersa* is not a plant of great elevations, and confines herself to the alps. I cannot give her all the affection that is her due, because she is so precise a replica, with lengthened stem and tiered flowers, of the exquisite *P. farinosa*, on whom it would be as impossible to improve as vulgar to make the attempt. And *P. conspersa* pays the penalty of her rash effort, for the plant is almost (though not invariably) biennial, having put so much force into her attempt to go one better than Pretty Bird-e'en that she has no strength left to go on through the years after the fashion of her model; who is content, like a true lady, to do the best she modestly can, and to go on doing so as long as possible.

In the topmost fold of the glen there is a glade of willows and poplars about the beck, giving a picture as if Paul Potter had here collaborated with Corot. I chose the chance of lunching, and watching for the advancing caravan right away down at the entrance to the valley. Then I strolled on, Spotted Fat being to-day so lame on three shoeless feet that I must needs walk the chief of the road, blacksmiths of sufficient calibre not to be found anywhere along this trail, since Spotted Fat, on sight of a forge, always demeaned himself as if possessed of twenty devils, and was by no means to be shod until got down on his back and hoisted aloft in the air, with each stout leg securely tied to a post. The Primula was very lovely in a powdering of pink wherever there was a damp burst from the hillside and fine turf in the folds beside the streamlets. The valley coils leftwards soon, and narrows to a mere ghyll between the steep impending fells, more and more North Country at every step. At length came the pass into sight round the corner, ascending in sharp zigzags to the

grassy col high above. Traffic was on the hill, ascending and descending, and a tiny eating-shop at the base.

Up the steeps I now fared, and as one neared the upper levels more and more alpine grew the scene. On the crest the long rich grass is the first sight you get of the typical deep and luscious pasturage that is the speciality along the desolate Marches of North-Eastern Tibet. Here it is full of flowers, and the downs that roll away from you on either side, like so many big Yorkshire fells, are seas of dancing azure in July with a rather coarse Borragineous plant, which, however, is quite superb in effect when it swathes the whole distances in colour, except where the celestial stretches are broken by the pale butter-coloured sheets of the tall lousewort. Immediately about one's feet in the grass the flowers are copiously dotted—Edelweiss in profusion, and the fringy pink of the alps, and a Grass of Parnassus hardly less fringy with its lacework of white stars. Just over the crest, however, on the northern face, the show is yet more dazzling, so make your farewells to the enormous prospect in the south right away to the mass of Thundercrown, very easily recognisable as it rises up to dominate the uttermost eastern horizon in a small lonely bulk of palest blue, while along the world, nearer and near, ranges a tumble of gigantic peaks still glorious in ice and snow.

A perfect paradise of blossom is what you find as soon as you begin to descend on the northern side of the pass. All over the turf towers up a beautiful big, single-flowered lavender Aster with a golden eye, stalwart yet graceful, recalling the plant we cherish as *A. Leichtlinii*, though not forming into mats.* Edelweiss and Grass of Parnassus are still here in jungles and sheets

* *A. limitaneus*, sp. *nova*, the Middle Bear, F. 173.

of silver and white, and just below there falls away a long springy slope of moist fine turf, all of shot rosy silk, with the multitudes of *P. conspersa*, among tiny dumpy bushes of the shrub Potentilla, just beginning to unfold its burden of bright golden suns. Quite close below the crest, too, there is an ancient rampart, or a cultivated terrace since abandoned to become a wilderness of lovely weeds. Here, in the rich moist bank, the Harebell Poppy is no longer to be recognised, forming huge dense tussocks a foot across and more, with as many as fifty magnified lavender butterflies hovering aloft over the clump, on stems of two feet high and more, as happy as any dock among the rank great rubbishes with which it shares the trench-bank. Now you descend towards the new prospect over a long valley very deep down among grassy Sussex hills, descending to a huge flat river-bed far away among fells of lower, slower, and less interesting outline. In the turfy plain just below the pass the Primula once more abounds in such myriads that one instinctively begins questing for albinos. The search, however, was vain, and I rode on down the monotonous convolutions of the valley, perfectly open and bare and treeless, with the high banks on the hillside of the road hanging in tussocks of *Androsace tibetica*.

It is long before we arrive at the debouchure of the upland valley, and descend, through a picturesque verdurous village on a promontory, down into the immense flat width of the river-bed, and thence turn up along the interminable stony levels towards Min-jô. The last stage of the day was very monotonous and long and trying, up those pebbly plains, beneath a blazing sky from which there is never stick or leaf of shade to shelter you. Poor Spotted Fat was now so tired that

it was more impossible than ever to ride him, even apart from the actual misery one endures oneself, stumbling along on a weary limping beast that can hardly move; so all up the lengths of the distance we trudged together, always hoping we could see Min-jô in the distance, and always deceived. No climbs or passes are half so trying on track as these stony stretches on the level, perfectly uninteresting, up river valleys, flat as your hand, between wide hills, dumpier and lower, and farther away and yet more insignificant than those about Karta-pu, while the crops through which you go are much thinner and less thriving. On and on we desolately wended up the enormous world, and at length Min-jô did actually reward us by appearing in sight, though still so remote in the distance that its very apparition seemed a new derision. However, that little faint flat line was undoubtedly the city wall, clouded up in the green willows of the suburbs, seated where three valleys meet, under raggedly terraced emerald hills, the whole wide and bare and open effect suggesting some very large expansive Val in the North Italian Alps.

I thought the city would never come nearer as we endlessly toiled onwards in the slanting beams of the now declining sun, and then, after we had traversed lengths of shingle and rounded vast bays of flat sward under a range of cliffs, and begun to come, in fact, within more reasonable prospect of some day attaining our goal, behold the track crosses a boulder-bed, and then turns callously away in quite the other direction from the town, ascends a down in loess gullies, and soon loses itself in a labyrinth of rat-runs deep under ground-level, in which you meander this way and that, blindly; so that when you do at last emerge from those viewless ruinous depths the wall hardly seems any nearer even

now than it did before. Through profound ravines of loess, however, gloomy and squalid with the squalor which is all that loess can ever attain by way of grandeur, the track, a mere convulsion of nature, all pits and crevasses, now does drop towards the river flat again, and after some winding over fields you find yourself approaching a long bridge that here traverses in many spans the shallow wide runnels of the water. And on the far side begin the suburbs of Min-jô.

Even now I felt it long, the meanderings unnecessarily tedious, and impeded by mill-streams, before we entered the city and traversed its dead streets to where the black charred skeleton of the mission-house rose on its little knoll in the middle of the town. Well might the streets of Min-jô be dead and silent after the passing of the Wolf, yet I was surprised to see how little apparent damage he had done to the town. For, apart from the Yamun and the mission, and a few other houses pillaged and burned, he had not wreaked any such destruction on the place as in the far more terrible fury of Tao-jô. It was on the nineteenth of May that the Wolf appeared before Min-jô, and found the place in no condition to resist. His coming, indeed, had been foreknown, and messengers had gone down the river plains to prospect, and get an estimate of his numbers. Unfortunately, these good people were so regardful of their own skins that they did not stay a moment longer than was necessary to see his mere advance guard, on sight of which they immediately flew back to Min-jô and lulled the city into a false security with the news that the invading army was a contemptible handful of a hundred or two at the most. So that, when the Wolf appeared in full force before the place, and summoned it to surrender, the Governors could do nothing

more drastic than close the gates and sit tight. The Wolves, however, were not to be baffled. The town defied them and refused them entrance, did it? They answered by running their swords into the interstices of the bricks in the wall, so as to form a number of rungs in a ladder one above another, and up these they ran "like rats," as the townspeople subsequently declared, in their indignation at so unsportsmanlike a proceeding; and thus gained the city. Here they first of all did some shooting among the leading citizens to encourage a healthy spirit of submission in the rest, and then fell to looting. But their first detachments appear to have been of comparatively decent and orderly character. The Governor having bolted, they called instead in their relays at the mission, where Mr. Christie entertained them to tea and polite conversation, and found them most affable. As the dusk darkened, however, the tone and temper of succeeding bands darkened also, and with nightfall came the time of lust and wine and blood. Again and again in uproarious furies they persecuted Mr. Christie to bring out his women; with revolver at head he again and again put them off their purpose for the moment, while his ladies crouched behind cupboards upstairs in corners cunningly concealed. But with the hours passions grew fiercer, and at last the Wolves were on the point of killing him at his post of guard, when the sewing-woman of the establishment, forgetting Christian traditions in the grander renunciations of her former creed, came out and gave herself up to the pleasure of the forces. For one night they had their will of her, while the mission ladies stole out and away into a cave of the hills; but on the next evening, while her captors lay about in relaxation, she also, with another woman, made her escape; and lay long lurking in a heap of hay

in a stable, while the defrauded soldiers came and went in search of them in all directions, and discussed, in their hearing, the advisability of running bayonets through the haycock, till with the strain of that interminable night the other woman went insane. As for the sewing-woman, she duly returned to her post; but the missionaries never liked to speak of that salvation they considered shameful, and in the far hills of Tibet those pious kindly Englishwomen are qualifying more closely than they'll ever realise to understand the close of Boule de Suif.

It was in the ruined compound of the mission that we put up that night in solitude, for all the missionaries were still very sensibly from home. Their house, indeed, up above on the knoll, was a burnt-out shell, destroyed with all its contents by the infuriated Wolves when they found its inhabitants had fled. However, various old friends of Purdom made us welcome, and more of them turned up, including a comic idiot, a shambling black-bearded soul like some comic turn on the music-hall stage, whom my fatigue, however, found only uncanny and rather repulsive, too like Tissot's St. Peter in an hilarious fit. Apart from the Wolf trouble, too, the news of nature was also disquieting; for not only was the bridge over into Northern China broken down, but the Tao River itself was so much in flood that no boats or rafts could cross it. So that there remained for us nothing but the other, and unknown, road up the Tibetan bank as far as the rope-ferry below Jo-ni. We went out ourselves to see the water, threading the orcharded desolations of Min-jô, which is a town so much too small for its walls, and so overflowing in suburbs, that much of its interior is a waste of long grass and crops and fruit-trees, now presenting a de-

pressing sight after a recent violent hailstorm that had been nature's other little contribution to the ruin already inflicted by the Wolves.

Down outside the city gate we went, and soon were standing on the edge of the river, rolling and remorseless in a vast mud-coloured tide, smooth and swift and still and fierce. It is at Min-jô that the Tao River takes its wild bend, just beyond the town to the east. Instead of continuing south, as it seems to promise, down the river-plain we had ourselves ascended from the Nan Hor watershed, the Tao Hor turns abruptly on its course almost at right angles, and tears away straight northward through the hills to join the Hwang Hor above Lanchow. A grim spectacle was the Tao that evening, in full spate of muddy water. How different from its chastened aspect of early winter. Suddenly down came floating a rough raft with three soldiers in command, naked as they were born, beautiful figures of bronze against the gloaming. We had a word with these on the signs of the times, and then, disheartened by the clear impossibility of crossing, we returned within the wall, and I spent the evening feeling exhausted by all these impediments and delays, till I was cheered by the Quattrocento clearness of the green sunset and the blue darkening air of the world, with all the mild little dull green mounds round Min-jô turned to pictures, and in front of us, beyond the town, a triple series of high hillocks with a fortress on their last and highest, and in an oblique fold up their flank four little mop-headed trees with white trunks—so neat, so formal, yet so primly natural, that the picture, against the lucid blue-green of the twilight, was exactly a scene from Cima da Conegliano, and one expected to see in the foreground, instead of black-habited missionaries, the little leaping fawns of the original canvas.

CHAPTER XV

JO-NI—THE PALACE AND THE ABBEY—HIS HIGHNESS AND HIS HOLINESS

LUCKILY for us, an official from the Viceroy of Kansu was in the town, proposing to go after Mr. Christie to consult about damages. As he meant to take the road at once, it was easier for us to follow suit. The westward track from Min-jô is quite as long, monotonous, and dull as the southern approach; the Tao occupies just such another uninteresting, flat, wide valley between just such uninteresting cultivated hills. Some twenty miles up, however, the ranges begin to grow higher, greener, less cultivated, and with slopes of woodland here and there; and the valley narrows with each semi-circular sweep of the river. Here, in the coppiced slopes above the water, begins amid the scrub a little lovely lily like a marble Martagon of coldest white, with pepperings of maroon along the inner edges of its turned-back segments. This is a cheer after the arid distances of the way, and so are the now lusher fields of corn unspoilt by hail. Here comes the parting of the ways. So far we have been on the big main highroad to the north, but now the flood of the Tao is pent and confined between immense masses of thinly stratified rock, forming narrows and races above a huge whirlpool. Here, then, by the great bridge, the road crosses over into China, and so continues, while on the left bank

from that moment onwards it is all Tibet and the principality of Jo-ni, the Tao River thus here forming for a time one of the few stretches of definite boundary that mark off Tibet from China. But when the Wolves went over and up towards Tao-jô they smashed the great bridge behind them, and sacked with fire the little village on its southern bank—an imprudence that cost them dear in their time of need.

Amid the ruins we passed, and continued our way accordingly along the riverine sweeps of Tibet, with more and more greenery about the growing hills, and a rapidly increasing alpine feeling in landscape and air alike. Round buttresses of coppice and woodland the way climbs, and then cuts across successive flat bays of corn, where little villages occasionally nestle. Here I saw the only specimens of the opium poppy that met my eye anywhere during my two years in China and Tibet, and even these were evidently only strayed seedlings from a former crop, sprung up amid the corn which had replaced their parents, and looking very outlandish with their pale white or mauve goblets amid the goldening grain, like flaunting strange tulips in the fields of the south. The long stage concludes in a beautiful snug village, which differs from all others I know, either of China or Tibet, in having very solid gabled houses that give so precisely the effect of chalets that we always spoke of Hsi ning Go as the Swiss Village. Here we deployed on the flat-roofed annexe of our host, and lay out under a marvellous coruscating canopy of stars, with fireflies hovering, to consider the news that now prevailed as to what was happening up country. It was of the most terrific: the Mahomedans had set to marauding and massacring, the missionaries were murdered, and the Prince of Jo-ni fled. However, we

were not going to be disquieted so late in the day by any such tales, and decided to continue comfortably up along the Tibetan side of the river, hoping for the best.

The next day's stage was of enormous length, for the Tibetan road follows the circumference of the big bays of the valley, instead of cutting diametrically across them like that on the Chinese side. Westward to the left it proceeds in more and more agitated undulations, the long grass of the slopes and waysides growing more and more lush, more and more dense with an alpine constellation of flowers—enormous plumes of Cimicifuga towering six feet high in creamy splendour above the massy acanthoid magnificence of the lustrous foliage, dittany faintly pink amid the low scrub, marble lilies and big sapphire larkspurs, and pale Geraniums like a cross between *G. sylvaticum* and *G. pratense* in every shade from white to a sombre plum-colour; while the field-edges and open stony places and hot slopes were filled with tangles of Anemone *japonica*, fat-faced and pinkish, and from the dry faces of the cliff and hottest slopes the Slender-leaved Lily aspired in rocketing flights of scarlet balls, and garlic hung out in fluffy globes of violet. The country, in a while, then grows lower and greener and opener and more bare, till the road takes yet a sharper leftward direction, and the hills immediately grow better and higher than before, with sterner lines and more woodland, and a succession of Scottish-seeming glens around their feet in the ample curves of the river. Then round a very sharp turning (with a big abbey and hamlet in a straight continuance of the valley, which for a time I fondly hoped might be going to be Jo-ni) you arrive at last at the rope-ferry, on the far side of which I saw a very crumbling little town which I did make sure was really Jo-ni, having heard Jo-ni so described, especially

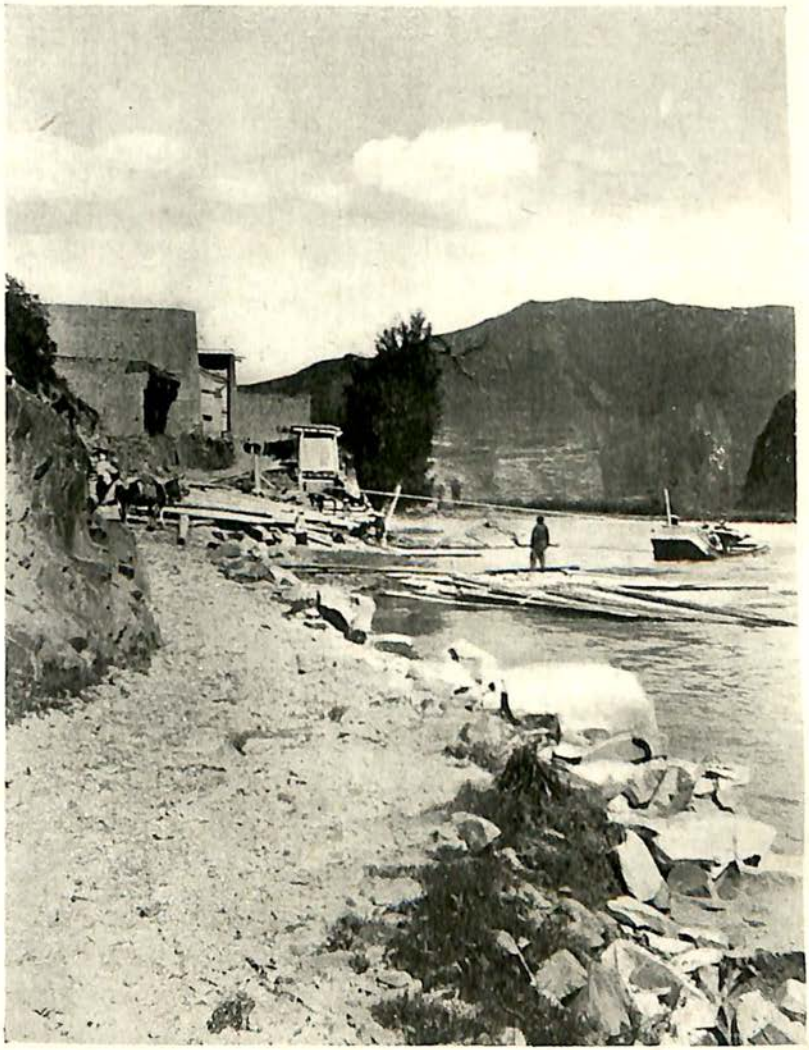
as high above, on the rim of a glen between the bare green downs, there stood an erection that might easily have been the entrance of an abbey such as is Jo-ni's chief title to fame.

Into the huge ferry-boat, secured to its rope across the expanse of the river by a running ring, we packed all the caravan, despite the usual passionate objections on the part of Spotted Fat; and when I reached the farther side safely I congratulated myself on now being so close to Jo-ni that it was not necessary to waste time over the customary nuncheon of toast and honey; and only proceeded to peck a bit so as not to hurt the feelings of the Go-go, who had dutifully got it out of the saddle-bag. Lucky for me I did, for that dismal hamlet was not Jo-ni at all, nor was there going to be any Jo-ni for yet many a weary mile to come. On and on and on we wended along the northerly bank of the Tao, here running south-west into regions more and more serrated and mountainous, though with no view of any real alps, nor suggestion of their neighbourhood. At one point, a mile or two farther, the Tao is joined by a beautiful beryl-green river winding into it from the left, down a rich happy valley of cornfields and wooded hills. Towards more and higher of these, now straight ahead of us, the road went coiling. All was green and golden in the declining afternoon, and the hills hereabouts are masses rather than ranges.

Along up a steep slope, ascending across the face of a line of precipices at a slant, the track conveys you to a high promontory over a bend of the Tao from which you should surely see Jo-ni. But you plunge at once into the viewless bowels of a loess gully, and when you emerge at the foot of the hill there is no more Jo-ni than ever, only in front another sweep of stonier, shallower

valley, while opposite, across the river, there is a comfortable Tibetan village and a highly painted, highly gabled palace, which is the convenient villeggiatura of His Highness whenever he feels insecure in his capital on the Chinese side of the river, and desires, for reasons good or bad, to betake himself into a securer hold. But still the way continues up and down and round and round, and the splendours of Bao-u-Go have long been left behind before you emerge from the glen into a very wide open basin amid low green hills, some forested on their northern face above the left bank of the river, but all the others bare as Sussex Downs. And there, above a forest of willows that fills the flat bay of the Tao, you see a squalid, low little town huddling amid its decrepit walls into a gully of the loess fell, with what looks like another much more prosperous town, in a much more efficient wall, lying along a shelf of the hill just above, beneath the shadow of the great green downs, whose pinnacles are each crowned with a chorten or a sheaf of lances—called an obo.

And this at last *is* the royal city of Jo-ni, unfortunately set on Chinese territory on the Chinese side of the river, while its kingdom ranges far over Tibet on the other; and its Sovereign is accordingly in the ambiguous position of being an independent potentate across the water, but a mere subject of China in his own palace at Jo-ni, at the command of the Governor of Tao-jô, like any common person, and well within the grip of the Viceroy at Lanchow. Nor is he master of his own soul either, for that second town on the shelf above is the princely abbey of Jo-ni, obedient to no authority less august than that of the supreme and Sovereign Holiness at Lhasa, and very much a force to be reckoned with, therefore, by the temporal powers alike of China and Jo-ni,



THE ROPE-FERRY ACROSS THE TAO-HOR

though in reality a royal foundation, established to provide a suitable appanage as abbot for the cadets of the princely line, and thus reserving certain rights and privileges to the founders: so that the Princes of Jo-ni maintain secular law in the abbey, and sit in session to award the heavy whip that hangs in the portal. But now there is no abbot, nor has been for many a long day, the last Prince Pontiff having died more than a century since, and no subsequent Prince having produced more than one heir. So that the lordship of the abbey is in commission among the Chapter, and its five Living Buddhas are the most important potentates of the present hierarchy, to say nothing of the very aged Dowager Buddha, who now occupies a gilded palace-shrine across the river, high up in a forested deep fold of the woodland, where he enjoys, even among Europeans, a high repute for sanctity and skill in the future.

All these things, and many nore, I subsequently learned. But at the moment, drifting wearily into that rather derelict and depressing place, had room only for feelings of relief to be at my journey's end. The local missionary met us outside the town (quite unconscious of having been murdered by Mahomedans, after all), and for the proper terms we engaged rooms in his house and a place at his board, though this was not likely to be groaning with anything but emptiness after this late scare of the Wolves. However, the house made amends, being a most beautiful old sample of Tibetan domestic architecture, bought in by Mr. Christie in the days of his occupation, and adapted for Europeans with a rare and refreshing regard for its native charms. These Tibetan castle-manors are of an Egyptian strength, simplicity, and grandeur, resembling nothing so much as gigantic boxes of smooth, ochre-coloured walls,

the Egyptian note being given by the slight inward slant of their blank unbroken faces, till the lines recall those of a pylon. Not a single loophole do they give upon the outer world; the door is their only outlet, and this is made as uninflammable and invulnerable as possible. Thus, when invaders or marauders appear, all the inmates have to do is to bar and bolt themselves in, and sit tight in their hermetically sealed box. Splendid and forbidding, however, as these domestic castles appear from outside to the ill-intentioned, who can find no way in, and make no impression on their stark sides, from within they present a much more humane aspect. For within is a courtyard on to which face all the galleries and windows of the house, court over court and gallery over gallery, with doors and balustrades and lattices of carved wood gone smooth and polished as ebony in the smoke and use of many generations. Such was the mission-house at Jo-ni, altered a little to its changed purposes, but not spoilt. Formerly it was a centre of Tibetan frequentation in the days of Mr. Christie, one of those very rare missionaries who have sense and balance outside their professional sphere, and who accordingly had established a very large circle of friendliness among all the Tibetans of the March from far and near as a man of real wisdom, apart from the eccentricities of his religious views, about which nobody need trouble. Accordingly, as a man, and not as a missionary, he was justly cherished; and became, in his mastery of the Tibetan language, the centre of all local politics, entertaining terms of cordiality with the Living Buddhas, and exercising a wholesome and restraining influence on His Highness, whose youthful passion for opium and the infliction of excessive tortures he was able for the time to quell. Now, however, he is removed,

perhaps only for a while, to other spheres of work, and his successor, unfairly handicapped by having such a character to succeed, is not himself of calibre to fill the post, having a tendency to meekness and indiscretion, which leaves him timidly helpless in the shadow of the Prince.

Indeed, unless one is of the same training, intellect, and degree of education, or else able to regard all religion with mild indifferent amusement as a crank, it is much wiser and pleasanter for the traveller to avoid these mission-stations, no matter how tempting a taste of European hospitality may seem from afar. But adjustment is impossible, unless one could bridge the gulf of many years, and step back into the skin of an uninstructed peasant in the fifteenth century. It is not possible otherwise to enter that atmosphere of amazing simplicity and superstition. The conditions of life in far Western China produce, in fact, an absolute return to medievalism in the already overstrung and undereducated minds that try to establish themselves there. There is nothing to give the balance that was originally vacillating or lacking.

A young man of the English provinces who, without any knowledge of the spiritual needs of the East, or any notion of what reactions so new a ferment as Christianity might produce in the life of the Orient if it could be introduced, nevertheless considers that his own crude youth is capable of teaching his great-great-grandmother to suck the duck's egg of religious truth, is already embarked on that disease of inflation which leads into dangerous places. Let him then come to China, and settle himself, far away beyond possibility of intercourse with any sane and sensible European, in a position of authority and influence which could never

have entered his head at home as the wildest dream; let him associate with nobody but those who share and reinforce his own views; let him read nothing but the astonishing rubbish with which mission bookshelves are solely and invariably crammed—rubbish absolute, not rubbish only from the point of view of an alien opinion, but wish-wash of the feeblest sort that ever trickled from the deliquescence of a feeble human brain, either venomous or twaddling, after the style of all such religious apologetics—and it will then not be wondered at, with the dry straining conditions of an alien climate, that cranks and crotchets and crazes develop themselves with such terrible rapidity, and strike root so deep that after forty there is hardly a man on the Border who can be considered wholly sane; while in many the franticness appears much earlier. Some of them cultivate a form of epidemic hysteria in which they jabber jargon and declare it the Pentecostal gift of tongues; others prefer an engendered epilepsy in which they roll and grovel across the floor, and are called Rollers in consequence. Each form of frenzy detests the other with a truly early Christian intensity, and attributes to all who disagree with it the nearest degrees of kinship with the Evil One.

I speak only, of course, of such conditions as are evident on the far borders of the west; possibly in more populous and inward centres a different life and a different type of man is evolved. But in those remote wilds it is tragic to watch how the plague-spot grows in the soil till even the naturally well-balanced and strong-minded men, of real earnestness and wisdom in all other matters, sink back into the atmosphere of St. Antony, discover devils in possession, hammer out prophecies about Home Rule from the book of Daniel, and set

their wits to making maps of the future world as wild as anything that hangs before a Lamaist temple or some fifteenth-century Italian monastery, compiled in a chaos of angels and fiends and crosses in golden atlases based on the lucubrations of Ezekiel and "Revelations" and other such turbid pages as one imagined had been left untouched since elderly Major-Generals gave up finding in them forecasts of Mr. Gladstone as the Great Beast.

Here, indeed, one begins to appreciate the enormous value to the soul of a creed with authority and backing, that dispenses the individual from the necessity of a feverish self-assertion which betrays his own consciousness of the weakness in his position. This authority, of course, the two main lines of Christianity possess in plenitude, and consequently you will find that the Catholic priest is at leisure to be well-educated, polished, interested in life and humanity, not being taken up all the time with the need for flaunting a position which in his case is axiomatic and impregnable. Even the Church of England, not illustrious in some of its stages, breeds the same spirit in her members; and you cannot enter an Anglican mission-station without at once feeling an atmosphere of urbanity and civilisation which indicates that the owner is not nervous nor self-conscious about his position. But up the Border, with singular infelicity, the work of conversion is entrusted chiefly, if not solely, to members of the small heretical sects and schisms of Protestantism, joined to the Church of England and to each other in an *ad hoc* alliance that but thinly veils the theological hatred which still persists, much to the edification of the non-Christian laity and the amusement of the Buddhist hierarchy. There is no guarantee here, accordingly, but a man's own opinion

and his personal interpretation of snippets from the Bible which no two views need ever interpret in the same light, and which therefore leave room for endless and violent diversities of opinion between people whom there is no central authority to compose or decide. Thus the whole condition is a clamorous chaos in which the one rule and proof of orthodoxy is to be the loudest and the longest shouter, the most conspicuously medieval in mind, the most fertile in religious vituperation. Few things are more pathetic than the spectacle of these unauthorised but earnest people struggling to arrogate for themselves, even in their own eyes, the position of being a Church, of being on the same level as their more fortunate brothers who have rule and order and immemorial sanction behind them. The more they assert themselves and their claim, the more grievously do they admit the inefficiency of the one and the emptiness of the other.

Americans, it is evident, resist the combined influences of all these dangers more successfully than men of European birth. Many of them remain sharp and genial souls, possibly because the atmospheric conditions of China are not so alien to Americans as to the others; they have more power of departmentalising their religious work into a water-tight compartment, while with the rest of their being they are keen (and even sometimes painfully keen) men of business. It is noticeable, too, how much more resistent are all the women than their husbands. One feels that they regard their menkind as a pack of sanctified babies, and are more occupied in mothering their bodies with a shrewd kindly wisdom in which there is more of sense and humour than perhaps its objects would be willing to believe. In almost all cases the wives are undoubtedly

by far the bigger and better men of the pair—more sane, more modern, and less limited in view and sympathy. They are, indeed, the pillars of the situation, and the moment the wife is dead or gone away the husband begins to sink inevitably into the sloughs engendered by solitude, China, a weak head, and an enfevered imagination. It will be interesting to see what form the younger generation will take. It cannot pass so wholly untouched by the modern spirit, by education, and the better sense that was becoming general in the opening years of the century; it cannot contemplate the religious problem with quite so blank a narrowness of outlook, nor be quite so conceitedly certain that its own way, and its own way only, is that which leads to the happiness of salvation. Yet, perhaps, one hopes too much; for the sons of missionaries usually take the more ardently to the world, and succeed in careers that might have raised their fathers' hairs with horror; while the newer ranks are thus left to be made up by the never-failing pressure of the frantic and the foolish.

Not but that the career has attractions of its own. Too much is talked of the hardships and heroisms of missionary life. Not to dispute for a moment the sincerity of the vast majority who enter the missionary service, it is evident that many of them but exchange their former life for one of much greater "affluence and innocence." The one price they have to pay is that of life at home. But this may very easily be overrated by the sentimentality which believes all the happiness of life wrapped up in the mere word "home," irrespective of what that home may be. Home is where the family is; one takes it with one and makes it with one. Sentimentality apart, no sacrifice is involved in giving up a life of insignificance and squalor in some

ugly little tenement in some hideous English town, to enjoy a far better income, a far better position, far more power and importance, in some beautiful Tibetan house on the March, or even in the dull flatness of some Chinese town. For suddenly the man who has hitherto been a nobody in the crowd becomes a person of consideration and prominence, courteously entreated by people to whom he would hardly otherwise have spoken. Such matters, of course, are as dross to the spiritual mind. But few human minds are so wholly spiritual as to be quite so indifferent as they wish and believe to the charms of power, position, and consideration; and the Shanghai tide-waiter or chucker-out who "finds grace" in a fit, immediately blossoms into a very butterfly of glory compared to the dim grub he would have considered himself before; and after six months of education in all the things he already believes, stands on a par with the people from whom in former days he would have been glad of a tip. All these things are very natural, and very much as they should be; but inquire how readily and with how much labour such situations of vantage could be obtained in England before you lay too much stress on the magnanimity of the man who condescends to assume them in the wilds of China.

Not, of course, that the risks of life are wholly absent. Where are they that? But by now the first concern of the Chinese Government is to cherish the life and property of every missionary as the apples of its eye, for the spirit of turning "martyrdom" to profit still persists. The Catholic Church, especially, sidelong and surreptitious, acts up to all her old traditions in never failing to make the most of any advantage to wring a concession or a sum of disproportionate money every

time a priest gets hustled down a bank, or the camera, broken with which he was insulting the sanctity of a Living Buddha in the holiest moment of his rites. At least, this is what the Protestants say; no doubt the Catholics say as much, or worse, in different ways about the Protestants, for the orthodox and the heretic Churches continue hating each other out here in the face of the common foe with characteristically Christian thoroughness, and there is never any intercourse between their missions, wherever I have passed. And the policy of the Catholic Church is not so unknown to the heretics as they pretend. The Catholic missionaries do, indeed, live in a characteristic atmosphere of seclusion and diplomatic intrigue, moving a hundred obscure threads to the greater glory and profit of the Roman Church, till they are justly regarded as the most dangerous of political agents by the Governors, and cordially detested alike by Governors and people on account of their exactions, and the way in which they form a ramifying society within society and manipulate justice in the interests of their converts, while nobody dares resist a power that is backed by the thunders of European guns. They are fallen, indeed, from their former state, when they successfully claimed Mandarin rank, and exacted first-class feasts from all the Governors of the cities through which they passed—an honour subsequently offered to the Protestants also, and by them prudently refused (and afterwards rescinded for all).

None the less, the Protestants also have their powers and their policies; it is inevitable that they should, but none the less regrettable. How should they not put a good word in for one of their own people, or seize the chance of letting a convert's house at a more handsome rent than is the rule ? These are all very proper

favours to do one's friends, but they cannot be expected to endear missionary efforts to the unconverted multitude, disinclined, perhaps, or too honest, to purchase such services by pretences, yet not pleased to see the plums of life thus going by favour, and influence being used on high by a powerful body.

A recent writer, in a book of game-shooting padded out with note-book scrappets taken down from a missionary's conversation and thrown undigested on the page, tells us a long and very tangled tale of the Border, the one perceptible point of which is the glorification of the missionary for not having cast the ægis of the mission's protection over a notorious malefactor who confidently hoped to obtain it, as a convert. This redounds wholly, of course, to the missionary's credit, but his consciousness of the fact, and the fact that such an expectation was entertained at all, shows clearly enough the light in which even the Protestant Christian communities are looked on by the world at large. Such an idea could not be conceived without foundation, and in all such schemes for conversion there is bound to be a certain unpleasant atmosphere of bribery and corruption, extending even to the wholly devoted and admirable work of the medical missions, schools of heroism and kindness, indeed, yet damaged by the intrusion of their bias in the form of hymns and prayers foisted on the patients, in such a way that the healing charity is no longer pure charity, but made a lure for the patient, in the hope that his sense of gratitude may prove the thin end of the wedge. How much grander merely to heal, and let the example of such naked unhuckstering devotion speak for its creed more plainly than any number of compulsory hymns and prayers, unwillingly heard and as soon as possible forgotten.

Apart from the medical missionaries, in fact, the others seem to lead a life of much pleasantness in these parts, subject to the various vicissitudes of life in China. But it is not a life to widen the sympathies or the mind. Comfortably the missionaries live, for the chief part, where prudently married; and many are the children they produce. But their existence is a small one, and their intercourse only, though frequent, with their fellows, with the natural result that tattle and talk thrive more prodigiously in mission-stations than even in diplomatic circles. Their work by no means fills their days or their minds. How could it? The rest of life accordingly revolves round their domestic affairs and their babies, the misdoings of other people's servants, the tales brought in by the milk-woman from the town and retailed over the tub. Postal communications in Western China are frequent and excellent, and the missionaries are assiduous correspondents one with another; and in consequence every mission-station is a constant ganglion of gossip, and the map is covered all over with a reticulation of these scandal-spots.

Here in yet other ways does the reinforcing creed and a genuine Church assist the Catholics. For, secure of their position, absolutely, they are in no need to be constantly protesting and asserting it. As units of an impregnable Church, that is, they can afford to be human beings apart from their priestly functions, can enjoy mortal life humanly, read a book, take a drink, stand a drink, and play a hand of cards. The unfortunate dissenting sects are compelled, on the contrary, to emphasise in every way a position that their own secret hearts are uneasy about; and betray their discomfort by proclamatory Puritanisms designed expressly to advertise and prove and enforce an otherwise un-

authorised claim to sacerdotal status. They are thus compelled to pretend that they "are not as other men are," and among their least felicitous methods of convincing themselves about themselves is their deliberate assumption of being too celestially and evangelically occupied to have any time or interests left over for the wonderful world in which they live. With every advantage at their disposal, they learn nothing and retail nothing, and when asked questions reply with conscious pride that they have "no time" for such matters—a pretence that is patently a pretence, when you contemplate what constant professional work the Catholics contrive to combine with scientific research in every branch.

Only in two cases at present has natural genius triumphed over the handicaps of creed and convention: apart from his religious efforts, Mr. Christie finds time to be a real student of the language, manners, and history of the March; apart from his predications, kind old Mr. Ridley at Sining is always straying out upon the paths of botany and entomology with an innocent and childlike delight that is all the more refreshing for the too general apathy of his kind. But at present, and with regret, it must be said, if you want information on any point of Chinese or Tibetan natural history, geography, and so forth, it is to the Catholics you must go if you want a sound, sensible, and workmanlike answer.

It can hardly be wondered at, then, that all those who are unable to look on the generality of missionaries and their little ways with a kindly indifference, as on some strange but unimportant race of different beings, may feel themselves misplaced and ill at ease in missionary houses, where texts stand for art, and the

Washerwoman of Finchley Common for literature. In any case, I attribute to this sense of exile from my fellow-creatures my own comparative dislike for Jo-ni and its district. It is a sad squalid town; its hills are huge uninteresting open downs of grass of no sufficient height for interesting plants, and though there are forests opposite, across the river, and along all the northern faces of the hills, the valleys that cut them give you many and many a weary mile to go before they bring you even into sight of the distant alps. Add to this the uncertainty and unrest of the moment, and the general turmoil in which life was lived. The very mission-house was stripped and bare by the alarm of the Wolf.

For, after the sack of Min-jô and Tao-jô, the Wolf's next move was to be down upon Jo-ni. Everyone who could do so fled away into Tibet; the abbey quaked even more poignantly than the town, on account of its greater wealth; most of the monks departed to their villages, and various of the Living Buddhas discovered an urgent need for change of air in the cool hill-woodlands of Tibet across the river. But the reigning Sovereign was the most eager of the lot for escape. Into old coolie clothes he hurried himself, and without further thought for his town and his people he made off unobtrusively to the safe refuge of his palace at Bao-u-Go. But before he went, to cover the shame of his own retreat, he insisted on the local missionary's bolting also; and he, being a meek young man, and very much under the awe of the first reigning Sovereign he had ever encountered, consented to this surrender of his post, and retired also from Jo-ni in company of his wife and baby. And after all this fluster and alarm, and despite the paragraphs that even reached the English papers, the

Wolf never came to Jo-ni at all; but by a very nice dispensation of justice certain covetous people in the town itself seized the opportunity of these desertions to make a thorough clearance of valuables from the palace and the mission-house alike, so that when these various dignitaries returned after the scare they found their respective houses as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

At the time of our arrival the Prince was still employed in trying to trace and retrieve the various missing saucepans and saucers, a task to which he successfully brought the aid of red-hot irons to such a point as almost to arouse protest among his people. He had his own "face" also to look to, for hardly had the Wolves gone scattering to the winds than the Viceroy, hearing how the Prince had demeaned himself, sent down a representative to inquire into the truth of things. Trouble upon trouble. His Highness had to make very heavy disbursements to this official in order to carry conviction for his tales of derring-do. However, being immensely rich, he was wise enough to open his hands widely, and so successfully plied the argument of silver that the official returned to Lanchow with a noble tale of His Highness's heroism, and in due time a high Chinese order was bestowed on the Prince of Jo-ni for his noble defence of his city against the Wolf.

All these agitations raging, therefore, the Prince was not, after all, particularly well disposed to further the perilous projects of a stranger, more especially as there had just occurred a singularly grave symptom. For if there is one spot more inviolate than the other on the March, it is the fallen monastery of Rou Ba, purchased by some American and made over as a sort of villeggiatura to the missionaries. It is not far from Jo-ni, well within

the immediate jurisdiction of the Prince over on the green fells of Tibet, and thus hedged about with such double sanctity that it had always considered that, whatever might happen in those parts, Rou Ba Ssŭ must always be safe from attack, inviolable in its high fold of the down above the river. And now, in the general upset, behold the Tepos actually daring to assault it. In the night they came in force and scaled the wall of the court in silence, and had almost brought off a complete surprise upon the sleeping missionaries, when the Tibetan mastiff in the gatehouse saved the situation by barking. Instantly rose the clamour of battle. The Tepos had their loaded guns, and torches in hand to fire the temple. The missionaries flew valiantly to arms in defence of their lives and wives and goods. Shots and shouts and screamings filled the quiet night, and dazed the dog to silence. Very sensibly ignoring any prehistoric and un-Christian remarks about "if a man would take your coat, give him your cloak also," the missionaries so pressed their victory out on to the hillside that when the vanquished raiders at last gave ground and fled they left five corpses on the field, beside the wounds they carried with them to their own lawless land away out in the western wilds. It may be judged how all the district buzzed with the news of such audacities. When the Tepos are on the move the peaceable Tibetans all along the March begin to quake. But such a move as this they had never attempted before, and all the mountain valleys and Jo-ni itself were in a panic; and it was no tactful moment to ask permission for a camp in the Alps, with these upsets disturbing the already convulsed district to such a pitch that soon afterwards the Viceroy himself sent down Chinese troops from Lanchow to quell the Tepos.

From which followed many months of tangled bribery and intrigue between the Mahomedan soldiers, the Tepos, the Chinese authorities, and the Prince of Jo-ni; ending in a patched and purchased truce, and the Prince summoned to Lanchow to explain the inadequacy of his hold over his peoples, he being only a Sovereign on sufferance, not even the legitimate heir of the uncle he succeeded by favour and choice of the Chinese Empire, which thus has power at any moment to displace him, Against which disaster he is always trying to secure himself by establishing an understanding with the abbey of Labrang and the Mahomedans of Ho-jô, as well as by going on arming his forces with the excellent Remingtons that his wealth allows him to supply.

With this potentate we sought an early audience none the less, knowing how essential it is to start betimes with one's preliminary negotiations. Our desires crossed with his, for we received meanwhile an urgent invitation from him, and duly proceeded to his palace under the escort of the missionary, to cover Purdom's invariable coyness when it came to official conversations—a coyness quite unnecessary, and usually vanishing after the first five minutes of pourparlers. The palace is a sumptuous and well-kept place in the Chinese style; its long roofs are brilliant and gilded; the masonry screen in front of the state entrance is freshly painted in the most garish and discordant hues. Up through the various yards we proceeded, and then aside into the last and smallest lateral court of all, where His Highness was standing out in the garden to receive us amid noble bushes of *Viburnum fragrans*, now burdened with their ruby clusters of fruit.

His Highness Yang Tusa, Prince of Jo-ni, is a remarkable and imposing young man, tall and very handsome

AN OLD TEPO: BUT OF THE WHITE VARIETY, NOT THE BLACK

and impressive in his Chinese silks and satins. Courteously he inducted us to his room and seated us in due precedence on the chairs appropriate to our several ranks. The conversation opened in the usual inquiries and compliments. My eye roved round the little low room. It was furnished in wealthy parvenu style, with a jumble of fine old Chinese things among dreadful European productions such as are most cherished on the Tibetan March—foreign lamps with roses smeared on the glass globes, and hand-basins enamelled with comic kittens. Meanwhile the conversation was proceeding unsatisfactorily, for before His Highness all the little missionary's nerve and new-learnt Chinese forsook him, and in the awe of unaccustomed royalty he could only utter faint timid squeaks like a schoolgirl; while on His Highness's own side there was that business of Chago to make him feel the situation a little strained. He took the unfortunate line of trying to dismiss it with indifference, an error of judgment fully brought home to him later by the Viceroy; but this, as well as other considerations, prompted him to deal with us as cautiously and observantly as possible, postponing our wishes rather than denying them, worried as he already was, poor young man, what with the Wolves and the Tepos and the monks and the brigands and the Living Buddhas and the Mahomedans and the Viceroy, to say nothing of his desire to keep on the right side of Purdom, on whose rifle he had cast the covetous eye of wealth. As for me, I sickened at heart as I listened to the stumblings and lispings and vacillations of the talk, realising that we were once again being played with, and that the Prince, under his smiles and conditional promises of assistance and suggestions of delay, really had not the least intention of lending

us his sanction in the dangerous lands across the river, or of incurring the responsibility of letting us go there on our own account.

A difficult and inconclusive half-hour brought us all out into the sunshine of the little court again, where we stood for a time in talk, nibbling the fruits of the Viburnum, of which the Prince, anxious at least to do us so much of easy service, promised to keep us the inedible kernels when the crop came to be gathered. After which we returned, in no radiant mood, down the shabby street to the mission-house to lunch. Hardly had we embarked on the meal, however, than the street outside grew full of clamours, vaguely penetrating the cool stillness of the house. His Highness was come to return my call. So more courtesies ensued, and stammering conversations, and long silences, with more allusions to the rifle. I was glad when that smooth and stately presence removed itself. Our plans seemed to be suddenly thrown into a fresh chaos. Not even yet had I learned the lesson of Asia. But the next day overwhelmed me by a post that brought in all the accumulated correspondence since my leaving Sian, after which Purdom returned from Rou Ba, escorting the famous Mr. Christie, the Providence of the border. But all they carried was news of disaster in the past, and trouble brewing up around us again in the future—at least, if rumour were to be trusted, which it fortunately never is. Anyhow, it was now swollen with resounding tales of a new White Wolf gathering head in Honan, of various rebellions and outbreaks in Kansu, of dissensions between Mahomedans and Chinese, and of a new Emperor having declared himself, claiming to represent the long-vanished line of Sung. Amid which encircling glooms the only ray of light was the retirement of the

Tepos from the scene, they being reported to have really retreated within their borders beyond the Stone Gate after the failure of the attack on Rou Ba, though it would take some time yet before the hill farms in all the valleys would get over the alarm of the raid.

What they both unfolded, however, was full news of the fall of Tao-jô, which, after what I had seen of the comparative preservation of Min-jô, I had hoped might have proved an exaggeration, but of which the reality surpassed all fears. Furious with their scant booty from Min-jô, the Wolves had swept on their fierce way northward to Tao-jô. Tao-jô is a very ancient city which had remained inviolate for many centuries past. It was therefore concluded that, as Tao-jô never had been taken, therefore Tao-jô never would be taken. On the rumour of the approaching Wolves, accordingly, the whole population of those parts had fled for refuge inside the walls of the city, in such multitudes that the streets were packed with the mob. On the twenty-fifth of May the Wolf came up against Tao-jô. The city, largely inhabited by Mahomedans, showed a fine fighting spirit, and resolved to resist to the last. Unfortunately, the bodies of men that went out to attack the invader lacked coherence and generalship, and not their fiercest efforts could stem the advance of the conqueror. On the twenty-fifth of May Tao-jô was taken by storm, and the Wolves immediately set themselves deliberately to destroy every living thing within the walls, not only the men and women, the cattle and horses, but down to the very dogs and cats in the lanes. The gates were stacked up to their arches with carrion, and the streets a chaos of corpses. Lust and fire played their part, and the women of the place, when they had served their turn, lay scattered limb from limb. The missionaries,

believing discretion the better part of devotion, escaped betimes in a wild flight upon the Alps, and as they wandered with their babies in their arms across the fells, and made their couch on beds of blossoming Primula, they could see rising high over the intervening ranges the glare of the burning city, to which for many weeks after they were not able to return, owing to the stench of corpses that stretched far out over the country like a miasma.

More splendid than this was the escape of the Mahomedans, for these, when all was clearly lost, shut themselves up with their wives and families in their great mosque with the many-storied tower, set fire to it, and so all went out of reach of the Wolf together in a burst of glory. Ten thousand human beings and more perished in the sack of Tao-jô, and in the wide enclosure of what had once been the most thriving and populous mart of the North-Western March only one house was left standing, by accident, in a world of smoking ruins, when the Wolves had done with it. The reasons for so appalling a devastation could only be matter for conjecture; nowhere else did the Wolf display so intense and deliberate a vindictiveness. The legend that most obtained was that the leading Wolf of this party had an ancient vendetta against the Mahomedans of Tao-jô, one of his ancestors having been murdered by one of theirs, and lying to this day in the graveyard of the Princes of Jo-ni.

However this may be, not even the unwonted opposition they had met was held enough to account for the way of the Wolves in Tao-jô; so they raped and ravaged and slaughtered throughout the land, and now at last came on the scene the Chief Wolf himself, or one of the many leaders who seem to have borne the name. Up

the devastated road he arrived in state, in a huge white litter with twelve bearers, and any lucky shot from the encircling hills might have put a stop to his career. But the Mahomedan forces on the heights still made no sign, content with guarding the northward approaches to the capital. The career of the Wolves, however, had here come to its ugly and ignominious conclusion, for they were caught in a trap. Ravage and rape as they might round the wreckage of Tao-jô, there was now nowhere for them to go and nothing more for them to do. Soon the problem of food became pressing, and their own methods recoiled upon their heads. Of what avail all the lumps of silver that each man by this time had securely sewn up in his quilted jacket; of what avail the horses which, before the indiscriminate massacre at Tao-jô, they had specially collected as only a less prize than silver bullion? For horses must be fed, and silver cannot be eaten. Their army was in a position and of such a nature that perpetual forward motion was essential, and if held up anywhere its ruin was assured. And from here was no way out to the north, for the passes were guarded by the Mahomedan troops, in no very good mood now with the invaders who had so ruined the leading Mahomedan city of those parts; while down behind them they began to have news of the Government troops advancing from Szechuan. They were caught in a trap, and there was no escape, as they had hoped, out into the wild mountains round the abbey of Labrang.

Quite suddenly came the end. Precipitately and on the spur of the moment the Wolf army scattered and fled, leaving the food still warm in the cooking-pots. Like a snowstorm in summer it dissipated and was gone, leaving nothing behind but a pompous proclama-

tion that it would shortly return and proceed to the sack of Labrang and Lanchow. They might as well have said Lhasa and London, for all anybody cared. The Wolf army was scattered and a thing of the past, making its way back again in countless broken bands by devious ways towards the hills on the border of Shensi. Some of them threatened to deviate by Jo-ni, and the prayers of the princely abbey went up day and night against the peril, to such good effect that the Wolves' own action was made the means of their own destruction. For though the fears and flights of Jo-ni proved all unnecessary, a band of some hundreds of Wolves went down the main road to the Tao River, hoping to cross the big bridge and so escape into the south through Min-jô. But when they came to the bridge, lo! they themselves had destroyed it. So now they had nothing for it but to build an enormous raft, on which they embarked to cross the terrible whirlpool of the Tao, of which even the most practised raftsmen have a salutary awe. Attribute it at your pleasure, then, to their own lack of skill, or to the deprecations of the princely abbey, but the raft turned over in the middle of the river, and more than a hundred of the Wolves were drowned, and for many a day to come the shores and swells of the Tao River were gay in the eyes of the countryside with corpses, to such a point that, when we were to come up to Jo-ni, the missionaries sent us down a huge bottle of carbolic, the purpose of which we could not understand until we came to the sweep of strand along the edge of the Tao Hor below the whirlpool.

So the Wolves met their various ends, and the army melted out into the vastness of China, the local ruffians retiring modestly each to his own district and trying to

elude observation in the crowd, or taking refuge in the hills till the storm of inquiry blew over. But for a long time the methods of inquiry were swift and sharp, and anybody found in possession of surreptitious and unexplained bullion sewn up in his clothes was promptly put to the proper fate of Wolves. As to the Great Wolf of this episode, his doom, like his identity, remains "wropped in mistry." How many White Wolves there were, or whether there was any real White Wolf at all, nobody seems to have ascertained for certain; all that is sure is that here and there leaders appeared under the name, and that at least one of them is supposed to be now salubriously adorning the city gate of Honan with his flayed skin. At one time his movement had seemed big and almost dynastic; but it had been doomed to inefficiency from the moment it failed to attack and subdue the rotten defences of Sian, and here in a raid as ignominious as ferocious it came to its undistinguished end.

These were the tales that Mr. Christie told, corroborated by Purdom, who had also been up to Tao-jô, and threaded the encumbered streets, and stood among the stacks of charred corpses, unrecognisable for human, in the black wreckage of the mosque. In the intervals they both had further interviews with His Highness, over whom Mr. Christie has the influence of many years' acquaintance and the weight of a strong character over a weak. With the result that our expedition no longer looked so hopeless, more especially as the Tepos appeared to have been shamed into quiescence by their late failure, and no more was being heard of them. Pending these diplomacies and preparations, Mr. Christie would be my guide over the abbey. But it was no time to see the stately place, more like a large town, with

streets and houses and churches at intervals, than anything we imagine by an abbey. For now it was quiet and empty, most of the monks having fled on the alarm of the Wolf and not being yet returned. Even the invocation wheel was invisible in its tower behind locked doors, thus depriving me of one of the most illustrious sights in Jo-ni Abbey, being a huge three-storied arrangement, perhaps the largest of its kind in the world, and conferring yet a further glory on Jo-ni, which holds along the March, at least, the third rank, after Urga and Lhasa, occupying a special position apart, and possessing the privilege of a printing-press, otherwise restricted to Lhasa.

The relations, in fact, between Jo-ni and the Dalai Lama are close and constant. Outside the town gate you may see a humble little cottage of mud in which was born the eminent saint who held the Regency of Tibet during the flight of the Sovereign Pontiff. It is strange to feel that among the naked little urchins who tumble in the sunny gutters of Jo-ni there may be some supreme manifestation of Avalokita, some mighty Prince of the Church, perhaps a future Pope of the Potalá. So high, indeed, is the prestige of Jo-ni that perhaps for this very reason the Dalai Lama paid it no visit on either of his two northward journeys, either when he fled before the British invasion, or when he came up in state to visit the Emperor and the Grand Dowager at Peking, bringing death to both their Majesties as his gift, according to the ancient superstition; which says that the same city can never contain at the same time the Lords of the Dragon Throne, and the Lord of the Potalá: but that one or other of the Sovereign Majesties must die. On the latest occasion of a pontifical visit to Peking it was the temporal powers that died;

on the previous one it was the then Dalai Lama, whose pompous shrine, upon the hillock over the northern lake of the palace, dominates the flat distances of the capital, and is irreverently recognised from afar by the foreigners as the Peppermint Bottle.

In any case, to return to Jo-ni, His Sovereign Holiness passed close by on his upward way to Gumbum, and received deputations, and promised a visit to his faithful at Jo-ni; but he never came, and it may well be that Jo-ni bore the omission with philosophy. For the Dalai Lama trailed no clouds of popularity on his passages through the north. The Chinese in particular, whether Buddhist or no, were prepared to regard with typical Chinese veneration an evident simple saint, a man of wisdom and holiness, such as they imagined the head of northern Buddhism must be. Instead of which they found an imperious Pope, exacting, ceremonious, and arrogant, travelling the country in full papal pomp, in the midst of retainers and ecclesiastical officials of brutal rapacity, who robbed the towns they traversed, and flogged the dense crowds in the streets to their knees, with heads and backs averted from the spectacle of His Holiness going by. Nor was he more beloved in Tibet; and Jo-ni may congratulate itself on an escape. For he stayed long at Gumbum and Si-ning, and showed himself so parsimonious of farewell presents and benefactions that on his return his proposal of a second visit was politely declined by both places on plea of restorations and repairs in process. With the result that His Holiness had to shift for himself and camp as he could; but he first stretched out his hands, and laid an ill-wish upon the abbot of Gumbum, and that ill-fated prelate faded away accordingly and died within the year. History does not record what imprecations he made

against the Governors of Si-ning; in any case, they and their city continued to survive—perhaps because they were Chinese, and therefore unamenable to Tibetan ill-will. But it must be trying to any official to entertain a guest so august that he must never pass through a gate. All up the northern road the road arches remain decapitated to this day, in memory of the passing of His Holiness between their broken piers; and when he came to Si-ning he must needs be hoisted up over the wall in a basket, for really they could not unroof the gigantic masses of the gates and their superimposed storeys of great towers. The problem of entering Peking was solved otherwise. In any case, he no doubt strongly felt that the immediate neighbourhood of the Grand Dowager was no healthy spot for ecclesiastical airs and graces, and the last Divine Autocrat of the world entered the capital of China by train.

All these things at various times I gathered, and many of them as I wandered with Mr. Christie up and down the streets of Jo-ni Abbey and through the wide courts of its many churches. Gay and brilliant are these buildings, with rows along their cornices of gilded monsters and what look like colossal pillar-boxes of gold. In rich tones of red their walls are often washed, and round under their eaves, at least in northern parts, runs a belt of curiously beautiful decoration made of bunches of brushwood packed tight, and then all clipped into a uniform flat face, which gives the effect of a band of brown velvet along the frontage of the building, on which at intervals are fixed round bucklers of gilding, each with some holy character in firm and spacious lines. But in the lifelessness of the deserted place the spectacle of these void courts and glittering frontages of gold and colour was only depressing; it seemed like a city of the

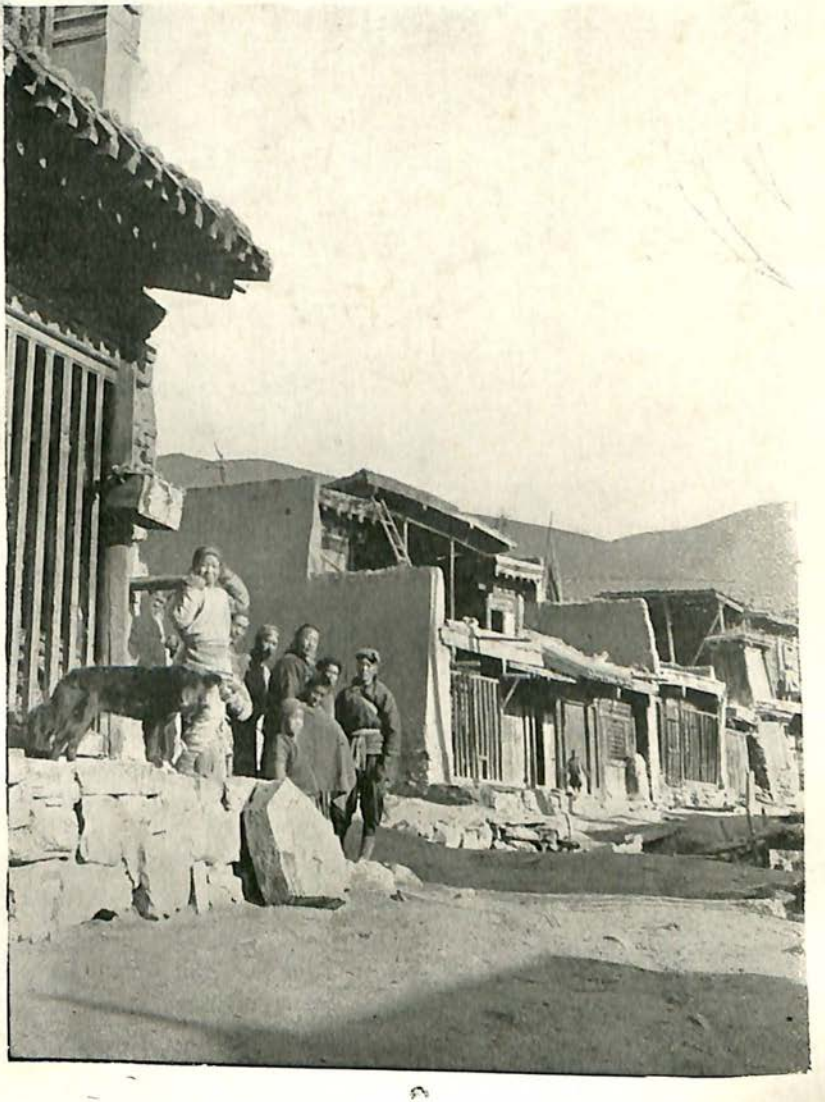
dead, and if now and then a rare monk padded across the flags and set some row of invocation wheels a-clank along the veranda-railing of some church, his presence only emphasised the silence and desolation of the rest.

One should see the main courts of Jo-ni Abbey, in front of the chief church, in the season of the sacred mummings which represent the defeat of Lang Darma and the triumph of the Faith—ceremonies which even the missionaries have given up talking of as "devil dances," though still, with typical lack of that good sense which is decency, they continue speaking of the religious statuary of another creed as "idols." In the mumming-time a very different aspect is presented by Jo-ni Abbey. The courts are crowded and a-buzz with people; outside the wall, in the wide market-place below the main gate and the little Gate of Shame (through which an expelled monk is rejected for ever from the congregation of the faithful), a huge fair rages, frequented by all the tribes for many a country round: Tepos of the whiter sort; Drokwas in their sturdy splendour, with scarf of leopard-skin about their throats; and a gay assortment of women of all the clans, glittering with silver, and in all the diverse gaieties of garment that mark off tribe from tribe. Here goes on the huckstering of the season, the horse-fair, the annual provisioning of the family; within, the front court of the abbey is taken up with celebrants, evolving before the crowds in their mystic movements; aloft, in the upper gallery of the main church, His Highness occupies the princely box. Ear-splitting long trumpets groan and bray and thunder to the clang of cymbals as the dance proceeds, and Their Holinesses the Living Buddhas themselves now come forth in full pontificals to play their part in the high ceremonial with slow

posturings and complicated evolutions of hands and feet.

Little show was there for Jo-ni fair in that year of the Wolf. There was nobody to buy, and little available money to buy with, had there been anyone to do so or anything on sale. So the fair never took place at all, and the buildings were shut and locked and empty till we came to a little court at the back, still and very silent in the glare of the radiant day. Here are the private apartments of the last Prince Abbot, maintained to this day exactly as he left them now these many years ago. Long low rooms they are, cool from the glare, but filled with a subdued sense of gilding, with gleams of gold in the scented gloom. The innermost room was the sanctum of the Prelate, and there are all his possessions still kept dusted and in order. On the dais are his carpets, and there his yak-tail whisk, and the holy-water sprinkler of old cloisonné, and the pen-stand. Along one side of the room runs the reliquary, like a long gilded bookshelf, open in rows of little arched pigeon-holes, through which from the darkness of the interior glint the calm faces of innumerable small statues of saints and Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the legion fantasies unknown to Gautama. In the midst of all this tranquillity, in which you feel the spirit of calm and holiness still hovering so near at hand that at any moment the abbot might come walking in and take up his pen, there sits the very presentment of the late tenant himself—a statuette of coloured terra-cotta mitred with a five-pointed mitre, and in his hand holding the wheel-sceptre of his dignity.

Before him and before his favourite relics fresh flowers are every day arranged in jars, and saucers of holy water set before them and perpetually renewed.



In Jô-ni Town, the main Street

The fragrance in that dim haunted room floats heavily in the laden air of memories, and at every moment one expects that little seated figure to open its mouth and break the attentive silence with speech, so perfectly alive still looks the last Prince Abbot of Jo-ni, whimsical and shrewd and wise and kindly of expression, the very image of a late Viceroy of Ireland. Immediately behind his head there hangs on the wall what perhaps was the most prized of all his possessions—a scroll worked by the hands of an Empress in the Court of Chen Lung. On a ground of oyster-coloured satin Our Lady of Mercies floats down from heaven in a miracle of delicate stitchery. Below her child-angels wait in the ripples of cloud, and the faces are painted on fine silk that stands out from the pearl-pale needlework in which all the rest of the picture is executed, except for the jewels and flowers which are wrought in a minute embroidery of tiniest pearls and beads of coral. Never was there a more tenderly charming work. Small wonder if the late abbot loved it, for the face of Our Lady is a special marvel of beauty and wistful compassion for the world. Beneath her smile leave we, then, the Lord Abbot sitting at rest in her care, and retire to the outer room to drink tea brought by the kind keeper of the private rooms before once more we affront the glare of the courtyard and the street beyond.

And now, to console me for the locked doors that everywhere defrauded my hopes, Mr. Christie suggested that I might like to have an audience of the Living Buddha of Nalang, the oldest and holiest and most important of the sacred personages at that time in the walls of Jo-ni Abbey. To this I eagerly assented, and we turned down a side street and stopped at the door of a neat new house to inquire of its keeper whether His

Holiness would receive us. The door-keeper attendant was a magnificent sight of a man of the finest Tibetan type, huge in bone and stature, with the monumental head of some Roman Emperor, enlightened by friendly brown-velvet eyes and a glittering show of teeth perpetually displayed in smiles. Stately in his swathings of purple he stood before us, then turned to ascend the little wooden stair to inquire his master's will. A moment later he was beckoning us up, and we duly followed. We found ourselves in the neatest of pin-clean low ante-rooms, panelled in bright pitch-pine, as it might have been any just-completed vestry. The room beyond was the sanctum, and of the same scale and decoration.

And here, on his dais beneath the latticed paper window, the Sacred Body of Nalang sat cross-legged in hieratic attitude, and his cross-shouldered robes of golden silk shimmered softly in the subdued sunlight of the room. Etiquette absolutely forbids a Living Buddha to arise from his seat, but the Holiness of Nalang received us with the utmost friendliness, and invited us up on to the dais to sit and have a talk, while he bade the attendant prepare us the inevitable drink of tea. The Sacred Body, it was evident, had for its tenant a wise and sound being; its face was marked with good breeding and alert interest, and its whole presence radiated rather learning and balance and kindliness than that extraordinary emanation of impregnable felicity which one only meets with once or twice in one's life—if one has the high fortune to meet it at all —and which, wherever met, in whatever country, sex, or creed, is the unmistakable sign of that happiness incarnate which is the Buddhahood, the perfected wisdom that stands for ever beyond reach of sorrow or uncertainty.

The conversation proceeded freely, facilitated by the kindness of Mr. Christie. Indeed, the difficulty of the situation was only increased by his kindness, for, the more willingly did he lend himself to talking for me of Buddhist faith to the Buddha, the more scruple did I necessarily feel about presuming on a generosity so willing and so rare. However, views of the world and its prospects were freely exchanged, and His Holiness showed lively interest on hearing that I had visited the Eight Sacred Places of Ceylon and possessed leaves from the holy tree at Anuradhapura; for the days of those far pilgrimages are past for the faithful of the northern school, Singhala the holy is no longer even a name to the brethren of the north, and no more do the Buddhas and searchers of China and Tibet follow the footsteps of Huen Tsang across the wilderness of Asia to the blessed spots of the south.

And then I asked him of his own life, and how it passed in the abbey. He gave me the tale of studies and services, and the correspondence that a Living Buddha has to entertain with the other churches and manifestations throughout Tibet. We talked of Labrang, and he told me that the dominant Buddha there was good, but in the hands of a Chapter full of wickedness, ambition, and rebellion (in fact, they say that the chief manifestation at Labrang is at present only a child). Then came tea in a superb squat old teapot of burnished copper, which spouted its contents through the mouth of a gaping dragon in brass; after which it grew time to be moving on our way, so as not too long to disturb His Holiness from the Scriptures that lay open before him on the little low table. The Living Buddha now reminded his acolyte in an aside, and suddenly was presenting me with that small, fringy,

silken scarf which all over Tibet serves as a visiting-card, and is a mark of friendship signed and sealed between giver and receiver. This one was of white, but often they are of a very soft and lovely watery blue. By an irony of trade they are all made in South China, and in the exigencies of friendliness among the Tibetan abbeys one never can keep these scarves of blessing as one could wish, but they flow out right and left. This was my first experience of the genial pretty custom. Bowing, I received the offering, laid across my outstretched wrists, and deplored that, not forewarned, I had not armed myself with any return, such as etiquette ordinarily demands, to show that the alliance is equal on both sides. Then we got up to go, and lo! a miracle, unique in Mr. Christie's experience; as Mr. Christie's own broad-mindedness remains at present unique in mine. For suddenly the Living Buddha rose from his sacrosanct posture, and was actually escorting me to the door in an unheard-of superfluity of condescension, perhaps granted to me as one of his own faith, but anyhow arousing wonder in all who heard or saw. It was not till we reached the threshold of the outer room that at last I could prevail upon His Holiness to desist and return to his meditations on his throne.

The life of a Living Buddha, in fact, is almost as much encumbered by etiquette as that of a King of Spain. This he may do, and that he may not; this way stand, and that way sit. His actions are all to follow the ordained lines of ceremony. Like the young Theodosius, he is trained up in the minutiæ of hieratic form from the first moment when the wriggling baby is revealed as the continuance of the last manifestation. For when a Living Buddha abandons his worn-out

body, the next step taken by the pious is to discover the whereabouts of his continuation. Among all the young children near and far they seek out one whose body bears the recognised marks of Buddhahood, and before him they lay an assortment of rosaries and thunderbolts and mitres and other ecclesiastical paraphernalia, among which are the personal belongings of the late manifestation. If the child be indeed his continuance, he will unerringly pick out the property of his own former existence, and thus prove his claim to the next place in the succession of that Buddhahood. It is obvious that the process offers many opportunities for fraud and jugglings, especially when some wealthy clan desires to have a Living Buddha in the family, and is ready to pay accordingly. On the other hand, to deny all validity to the test is to limit very arbitrarily the possibilities of memory, and the nature of the being. "How should I not have recognised the things," says the Mina Buddha at Gumbum, "for they were mine?" And it may well be that more Living Buddhas are revealed by such a stretch of psychology than Popes have been chosen by celestial inspiration.

The word generally used in English for these high dignitaries of the Church is "incarnation." The word conveys a wholly false idea, and makes the whole conception sound yet more antagonistic to the Dharma of Gautama than it already is. The Living Buddhas are not incarnations, but manifestations through the flesh of certain aspects of the Supreme Holiness. The idea of these revelations was born in northern Buddhism long after the dissolution of the Perfect One, and has never met with a trace of favour in the purer school of the south. In the Buddhism of the Great Vehicle, however, which prevails over China, Mongolia, Tibet,

and Japan, the dogma of continued consciousness has been expanded into the basis for a vast Pantheon of quasi-divinities, which has led to so important a politico-ecclesiastical institution as the Living Buddhahood. Quite early the State also saw the extreme importance of this development, and laid its hand on some of the more eminent manifestations. Technically, at least, the ratification of the Emperors of China is necessary to the recognition of the Sovereign Buddhas at Urga and Lhasa, and long ago the Throne conceived the happy notion of insisting that the supreme manifestation of Mongolian Urga could never take place but through the body of a Tibetan, thus preventing the Living Buddhahood of Urga from ever becoming a focus of Mongolian nationalism.

But quite apart from the interventions of the secular power, the Church itself has found one of its most valued weapons in the Living Buddhahood. It is a spiritual rank, like the Cardinalate, which the Church can acquire much money, credit, or power by giving or withholding; seeing that on the sanction of the Church depends the validity of the title. At need the hierarchs, for example, can declare that such a manifestation has determined and will never reappear, as has been done in the case of the luckless Buddha who sheltered Chandra Das in Tibet; after whose murder it was announced from Lhasa that he could never continue, and that the Buddhahood of that place had ceased, much to the indignation of the abbey and the townspeople, among whom the continued manifestation of that heroic holiness is still living and well known to this day. In the same way, for political or financial purposes, Buddhahoods may be recognised or denied. Rich families can arrange to have one, and wealthy abbeys can be enriched in

the spiritual world by lavish disbursements in the temporal.

The Living Buddhas, however, are not necessarily or finally attached to a religious foundation, and are not Church dignitaries in the sense that the priors and abbots are; but stand, as it were, aside from the ecclesiastical organisation, though of superior sanctity and importance. None the less, it usually happens that districts and abbeys develop their own manifestation, and that on such and such a community such and such a manifestation sheds the illumination of his permanent presence. And thus it may well be that some new monastery, founded in an outburst of wealthy piety, may have every splendour of establishment, but only a cheap little Buddhahood of some two or three existences, while its neighbour, old and poor and crumbling, rejoices in a Norfolk Howard of twenty descents or more. Hence heartburnings and bitterness, until the Church has been invoked, and discovers unsuspected antiquities in the younger manifestations, or else invents for the well-dowered abbey a new and immemorial projection of the Divine.

Thus in such a mixture of sham and truth, diplomacy and the inspirations of memory, the Living Buddhas are of all sorts, from the sodden Sovereign of Mongolia (who usually has to be held propped on his grubby old feet) and the supreme Pontiff of Lhasa, the most audacious and able of political ecclesiastics who has appeared for long past in East or West, to the towering sanctity of the Tashi Lama, and of many another manifestation of truth lurking unsuspected in the enormous folds of Tibet.

It is interesting to ask the missionaries their views on the hierarchy, and note the curious moral obliquity into which their deliberate intolerance warps even the

most honest minds. Generally and universally they try to give the impression that the whole monastic order is as worthless and corrupt as its worst members; if you probe no farther, they will gladly let you go away with that impression and no other. If, however, you press inquiries, reluctance overclouds their manner; and if you pursue the matter yet more relentlessly, a lingering honesty, dominant in their natures except where matters of religion are concerned, resumes at last the upper hand, and against their very wills they have to admit the existence in the monasteries of saints and learned souls and serious seekers. They would like to deny these truths, but dare not; they do their best to slur them over, and lead you hastily past the dangerous spot. Their conscience, jibbing at a too bold *suggestio falsi*, is tranquil, in fact, in a *suppressio veri*.

A very easy *suggestio falsi* it is, of course; for not the hedge priests of Ireland or Italy themselves could give a worse impression of bestial stupidity, greed, and sly lust than do the frowsy purple-clad monks who lounge about the gates and courts of a Tibetan abbey. But those who take the measure of the monastery from such people forget that nowhere in the world are the wiser and holier specimens of a religious community to be found lolling about in public and making themselves a spectacle. Pursue inquiries to the inner recesses of tranquillity, and you will soon realise that humanity is very much the same all over the globe—a fairly well-balanced mixture of good, bad, and indifferent. All over the globe the life of collective celibacy is a perversion of nature, and in such strange soil spring always strange flowers of body and mind. Where a certain percentage of the male population is claimed inevitably for such a life, without the least regard for

vocation, you are bound to find among such unwilling devotees as low standard of living and learning as prevailed in Italy when nunneries were the recognised dust-heaps of unwanted daughters, whether they wished to renounce the flesh or no. No religion, in fact, can ever fairly be studied in any land whose peoples claim to practise it. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the more obvious specimens of any religious foundation in East or West give but a poor notion of its real character for those who take its purposes in earnest; and travellers will do best to be very wary about judging from their own eyes, and still more wary about judging from the lips of missionaries, as to the real value and character of a big Tibetan abbey, where the serious and honest students of truth keep their apartments accordingly, instead of lounging about in knots on the street, and the hierarchs and older dignitaries remain as hard to come into contact with as the very Living Buddhas themselves, in the sainted seclusion which can only be broken for some most special occasion.

For, however often and long you may stay in a Tibetan abbey, you see the superior prelates but rarely, and the Living Buddhas never at all, unless you pressingly ask an audience or they themselves desire an interview. Some of them do; some of them are persons very much on the alert for Western illumination. Of such is the Living Buddha of Garam. This eminent manifestation heads a sect of doubtful orthodoxy in the north, and is overlord of more than forty abbeys and other religious foundations. And his greatest delight is to hear of European marvels and possess them for himself. Over the mountains comes His Holiness in state to sit with the missionaries and hear their tales of steamers and trains; he is on the friendliest terms with them all, and

they with him. In fact, of him alone do they volunteer good and even enthusiastic words; but anyone who appreciates sewing-machines and gramophones touches a European at once irresistibly on his weak point, where not even religious prejudices can render him invulnerable.

So that His Holiness of Garam is on very happy terms with the strangers who would like to undermine his authority. They exchange frequent visits, and only once was there a contretemps—when the Living Buddha, inspired by an access of pity and affection for his friends, appeared one day in full pontificals in the mission compound, and proceeded solemnly to exorcise its presiding devils of folly and prejudice. The missionaries, though grateful for such a culminating token of affection, felt that it might perhaps have taken a more felicitous form. This little failure of tact, however, was fortunately lived down, and the Living Buddha went home rejoicing in a bicycle, soon to return, being a man of copious private wealth, to order a gramophone and a typewriter. With all these he so much felt himself to be enjoying life that he grew greatly to dislike the notion of passing out into Nirvana on the dissolution of his body, while the manifestation continued in someone else. How could he avert this fate, and so descend a rung in the ladder of sanctity as to be sure of not yet quitting the delights of mortal life in a new existence? After much thought the holy man effectively solved the problem. He added a wife to his collection, and now the Living Buddha of Garam is secure of not being torn away by death to the thinner joys of the hereafter. Care, though, is still necessary, for he is now in his thirty-ninth year, and in their fortieth year all previous manifestations of that Buddhahood have passed on. Very anxious to do no such thing, the present holder

of the position hugged his home so closely all the season that I was in those parts that we never achieved a meeting, as my own movements did not allow me time for the long and arduous journey to the mountains of Bayenrung.

Despite the many absurdities and minutiæ of religious etiquette by which the abbots and Living Buddhas are surrounded, it is interesting to see, on the spot, how like a tremendous impregnable wall the smooth blank frontage of northern Buddhism stands up over the infinitesimal feeble scrabblings of the missionaries round its base. Against so huge a background their efforts and notions show up nakedly in all their tragic incoherence and incompetence. Protestantism is neither seen nor thought of at home; where you get its professors isolated against the enormous wisdom of the East, their callowness becomes cruelly clear as never before. And in their attack upon the walls of Lamaism their weakness comes out more than ever disproportionate to the thing they are attacking. It is possible that the Catholics might have more of a chance; so close are Lamaism and Catholicism, that Tson Khavà, the saint who invented the supremacy of Lhasa, is claimed by some of the Catholics as having been Christian-trained, while anyhow the spirits of Lamaism and Catholicism are so exactly similar that for a Catholic tó convert Tibet would be merely to change one elaborate form of Vaticanism for another, differing in nothing but a few misty theological points which would never affect the main issues. But when you see the Protestant dissenters up against the fastness of Tibet, bringing their ignorance, their intestine disputes and divided counsels, their lack of learning, sense, or experience of life to bear upon the impregnable citadel of Tibetan Vaticanism, the spectacle becomes

merely pathetico-comic, and they might as well ply their ministrations beneath the walls of St. Peter's as against those of the Potalâ.

There is no doubt that the chain of Lamaism lies heavy over Tibet. But a chain may lie heavy without galling, and the Lamaist hierarchy is so rooted and grounded in the people that they are one with it and it with them. Never could there be a more hopelessly united front to attack, and never a more tremendous armoury of supernatural thunders against which to oppose only the personal opinions and solitude-begotten fancies of Mr. Jones or Mr. Smith. Fast bound in his faith, the Tibetan gives every sign of being happy in it and finding it sufficient. In point of fact, he is far more closely welded to it and far happier in it than his likes in Ireland, Spain, or Italy. Genuine devotion, accordingly, meets your eye at every turn, and if you call this superstition—well, superstition is nothing more than the name you give to your own devotion when you see it in other creeds. That it is devoted to material ends, again, is equally true everywhere. All prayer and all priestcraft thrive on humanity's hope of getting good things for the seen world by force of persistence in pestering the unseen.

I do not talk, of course, of the aspirations and communion of the saints, which are the same in every creed and country, but of the belief and practice of the vast ruck of humanity, which is equally the same in every creed and country, though more sensible and kindly in lands where the cult gives right conduct precedence over "right" belief. It will be time for us to talk of superstition when a Queen of Spain can have a baby without the intervention of Virgin's girdles and Madonna of the Pillar; when a Russian Grand Duke is able to

be rescued from a shipwreck without ascribing the fortunate occurrence to a miracle-working icon in his pocket. At present we are still in no position to throw stones at the "superstitions" of Lamaism, and the peasants who carry the Scriptures round their fields to insure fertility are in exactly the same case, neither better nor worse, than those who want the Bambino bringing when they ail, or toil up the worn rungs of the Santa Scala, or distribute Pope-blessed medals to an English Parliamentary Commission assembled to consider the reform of the Divorce Laws. How much nonsense and how much of sound primeval sense there may be in all these antics let someone else decide, and on the extent to which material acts, if sincere in intention and sufficiently intense of purpose, can react on the spiritual world. The one thing clear is that in this matter all ages and all races and all creeds are at one. The Pope and the medicine-man are the same in kind if not in degree, and it is impossible for us Europeans to throw scorn on the Lamaist position without at the same time abandoning the Christian. Either all prayers and formulæ have equal possibilities of validity, or none have any at all. There is no *via media;* and no creed can claim a monopoly of magic.

Whatever ultimate value, however, may lie behind observances and forms, the mind that is ill-attuned to them, or positively out of tune with them through religious differences, is apt to find them absurd unless in its own way of belief. The British parson praying for rain offers no less food for meditation than Lady Aoo of Tibet in all her best, with her Bible on her back, going on a pilgrimage of constant contiguous prostrations round a holy abbey in hopes of a baby; the pontifications and pomps of the Pope are neither more nor

less respectable than those of a Living Buddha, trained up through the joyless years of his rigid youth in all the abstinences and etiquettes that his high rank entails if he is to be worthy of it. The Pope, at least, has the privilege of bleeding when wounded, a privilege denied to the sacred bodies of the Living Buddhas, who are no more supposed to possess mortal blood than the Queen of Spain legs. This dogma leads the unfortunate inhabitants of sacred bodies into strange and difficult places. When one of the most illustrious of the confraternity was riding down to Si-ning once, his mount stumbled and threw him, and the holy man sustained a bloody nose. In such a case he must on no account be seen by the world. Accordingly, he had to lie *perdu* in a bush all day until dusk came down and permitted His Holiness to ride surreptitiously into the city with his handkerchief over his face. Even the Buddha of Garam, when in the necessity of having a tooth pulled, must repair with caution to the nearest missionary, and there in the farthest corner of the inmost and most secret yard, with watchers posted against spies on all the walls, the relic is reverently removed and wrapped up, and every shed drop of the sacred blood is made to fall into a little hole previously dug in the garden, into which the divot is afterwards replaced, and every trace obliterated that could possibly betray to a censorious world that the sacred body had lost anything of its essence.

My Lady Aoo of Tibet, sifting beans upon her roof-top, with the hay-rick at her back

CHAPTER XVI

THE FOOTHILLS OF THE STONE MOUNTAINS

Among these high and holy persons proceeded our diplomacies under the governance of Mr. Christie. A trio of strayed Wolves, indeed, were detected in hiding, and duly condemned to be shot; but otherwise the general alarm seemed subsiding, and the Prince grew reconciled to the notion of letting us go off to camp on the Alps above the Tibetan gorges as soon as the official from Lanchow should have gone back to the Viceroy. Meanwhile we made a preliminary excursion up the Mirgo Valley, the first glen that opens up into the wooded ranges of Tibet across the river just below Jo-ni. It proved a very long day of thirty miles or so, and I, who was ailing at the time, felt ungratefully cold to many of its charms at the moment, though in retrospect it ranks high among my Tibetan expeditions. We went afoot, for Spotted Fat was resting, while the good white horse was now turned loose for the rest of his days upon the Elysian hayfields of the hills. A couple of miles down the flat bay below Jo-ni the bridge spans the Tao River into Tibet. On the far side is a village of noble castle-blocks, and thence the road leads straight ahead up the Mirgo Valley in an interminable level ascent that might suit a bath-chair. On and on we tramped, Mafu and the Go-go in attendance, and four of His Highness's soldiers, armed and bandoliered in case of lurking Tepos.

It is a lifeless and lonely land, without sign of human habitation, and of a character hitherto unknown. On either side rise steep breasts of mountain, descending to the glen in abrupt spur-like sweeps, between each of which you have a glimpse of the main ridge far up above behind. All the region is alpine in its vegetation, and the valley-bottom is filled with a dense jungle of honeysuckles, willows, and the bushy Potentilla, now just developing into solid masses of gold in the glen, while up above, in the folds of the spurs, its bushes are of such pure whiteness that it looks as if a dappling of snow were lodged in the interstices of the hills. But the most curious feature of all this country is that while on their northern face the hills are densely clothed in fine ancient forests of birch and larch and fir, on their southern they are all as bald as your hand, presenting an unbroken expanse of green lawn.

The country and the distances are all on a huge scale, and the Mirgo Valley is a long, far proposition, none of the lateral glens, as you pass them one by one, affording easy access to the green ridge towering unattainably high to right and left, but especially near and high on your right. The honeysuckles of the valley-bottom are legion as you get gradually higher. Many of them are dull and dowdy things, only valuable for their fruits, which in some are like boot-buttons forming fours; and in some are scarlet cornelians, in the same or other formations; and in others are beautiful big drops of ruby, pendent on thread-stems so fine that they seem indeed to be crimson dewdrops weeping from all along the sprays. One of them, otherwise insignificant, bears a black fruit that makes delicious eating, whether stewed or raw, and is a discovery of the missionaries, not valued by the Tibetans, and of none too common

occurrence in the jungles that fill the beds of the alpine valleys at some nine to ten thousand feet opposite Jo-ni.

And the most beautiful of them all is also here the most abundant, that precious *Lonicera syringantha*, so hardy and so fragrant and so very lovely both in fruit or blossom that I had wondered for years why it was so rare in English gardens until I was told that at home it rarely seeds (though it has certainly done so with me), and is of extreme difficulty to propagate otherwise. The Lilac Honeysuckle, indeed, is neither lilac nor honeysuckle, but has a charm distinct from both—a middle-sized, graceful bush of small greyish foliage, beset with innumerable bunches of little crystalline pearl-pink stars of the most ravishing fragrance, scenting all the air, and turning at last to knots of ruby-scarlet fruits. When, years ago, I saw it sedulously trained on a warm south wall at St. Anne's by Clontarf, and instantly fell in love with it to the point of seeking it (and for many seasons in vain) round the leading nurseries of Europe, I had had no notion that the tender-looking treasure was, in point of fact, the characteristic shrub of the alpine coppice all up the cold mountain ranges of North-Eastern Tibet, at least as far into the frozen north as the bleak ranges of the Da Tung Alps. It is not, indeed, a plant of the general copse or woodland, but abounds magnificently in tangles of its likes in the opener brakes of the valley-bottoms, and down all the hedgerows of the hill region opposite Jo-ni, ascending in profusion among the Potentilla to the zone of dwarfed vegetation high on the open flanks of the fell. It does not like heat or the south, and refuses to descend into the Blackwater region, unless, indeed, that wee dwarfed beauty that runs about there

in the highest lawns of Thundercrown be a stunted state of the lilac honeysuckle; which, however, differences in the size and shape of the berry still leave me free to doubt.

All sorts of alpine hay-flowers abounded in the rank grass where the coppice failed on the slopes; dim Geraniums, tall golden spires of Senecio, an imperial tall Salvia with whorls of richest violet one above another, a big rose-pink Geranium running about in the finer turf on the finest of threadlike stems,* a sapphire Dragon's Head with crowded helmets of blue squatting close above its tuffets of crinkled foliage between the very stones of the track-side, and in the rocks a wee little Saxifrage like a small moss with stars of gold; in the marish slopes and stony places *Primula conspersa*, and rare among the broad-rayed Asters and the matted Iris that began to fill the grass-levels along the track the most glorious Aster of the year, a towering, touzle-headed person of a thousand narrow rays of richest violet flopping from a flat central disk of vermilion orange. I called it the Big Bear,† to differentiate it in the eye of my readers from Middle Bear, which is the commoner broad-rayed Aster of these grassy Alps, and from Little Bear, which is the dwarfed and magnified beauty of the highest naked shingles. Now all three of them are known to be species as new to knowledge as to cultivation, and the finest of the bears is mine.

But meanwhile the track ascends and ascends in leisurely length through the brakes, and never appears on the right that commodious ghyll by which the ridge is best attained. It is scant consolation for the distance,

* *G. Pylzowianum*, like a very frail *G. sanguineum*, with bigger flowers of clean soft pink.

† *Aster Farreri*, sp. *nova*.

Aster Farreri, sp. nova

that with every foot of rise the ridge grows lower to attain. Better the sharpest of short ascents than gentle ones of such endless length. Nor were there new thrilling flowers to enliven the way. The stacked stalwart spire of *Epilobium angustifolium* may turn all the open slopes to sheets of solid crimson, but not even the extraordinary amplitude and splendour of this universal Tibetan form can make one forget that the plant is almost as universal in the Alps of Europe, even to the uplands of England. The absence, in these wooded valleys, of any hint of big mountains and conspicuous high places is also depressing, though not unaccountable, as there do not happen to be any hereabouts, nature considering that with the ridges of eleven or twelve thousand feet you ought to feel yourself handsomely content in your alpine aspirations, though their luxuriance and vegetation do not represent more than the four to five thousand feet zone in the European Alps, or the mere level of Lanslebourg or the Boréon. One feels, none the less, shut in by woodlands and fat hills and dulness and uneventful coppice. I trailed my way along dispiritedly, till suddenly in that despised coppice I saw strange blobs and blots of living scarlet light that seemed to flicker in the green twilight of the willows. It was my first sight of the Blood Poppy.*

At all times and in all places the Blood Poppy calculates successfully on taking your breath away, but never does it do so more triumphantly than when you see its huge flopping flags of vermilion hovering in the sunlit patches of a copse. Of all its race, it is perhaps the most overwhelming—not, indeed, as you see its melancholy pennons drooping at Chelsea, like the flag of some London club on a tired sad day of November,

* *Meconopsis punicea*, of course. What else *could* it be?

but when the full serpentine and sinuous magnificence of its blossoms is deployed in countless myriads over the high Alps of the Tibetan March. It has the same single-blossomed, butterfly elegance of the Harebell Poppy, but is on twice the scale of size, and has preferred to the inimitable refined charm of the other a royal blatancy of splendour which in its own more savage way is almost as captivating, though the gardener will always prefer the more permanent friendship of the Harebell Poppy. For the Blood Poppy, having once waved at you the flamboyance of its bloody beauty, departs inevitably into a better world; and the clump of foliage, so like that of a yellower, hairier *M. quintuplinervia*, instead of dying down with a knop of green for next year cradled faithfully in its hairy heart, turns flaccid and autumnal, and wilts away out of the earth altogether, and the poppy must depend for continuance on the seed it has sown. And something of this ephemeralness transpires through the flimsiness of root and tuft, and the very flaunting glory of the flower. It has no look of wearing or endurance, unlike the modest butterflies of the harebell, whose Quaker-like loveliness already suggests its Quaker-like persistence. But when all is said and done I doubt, until I come to it, whether even the heavenliness of the celestial poppies can dethrone *M. punicea* from the supremacy of sheer violent splendour in its family, where sheer violent splendours are so much the fashion as almost to be the rule. Thenceforth it is par excellence *the* poppy of this particular region of the Tibetan March, extending westwards along towards the ranges of the Upper Hwang Hor, whence it was first recorded, but not descending to the Siku regions nor crossing the Yellow River. Sometimes in nature it varies, as in cultivation,

with six petals instead of four, and often achieves an odd variation which might strictly be held to constitute a new species. For, whereas the rule is that its seed-pods should be richly hairy, there is quite a considerable percentage of tufts that wear their capsules absolutely bald. Never once among all its millions could I detect the least inconstancy of colour, though needless to say I quested long and far in search of the pure albino which must assuredly be one of the loveliest flowers on earth, wherever it may be hovering over the vast lawns of the Tibetan Highland. A missionary, indeed, who received a bunch of its blossoms with rapture as "What beautiful lilies!" did go on to tell me that once he had seen this same flower, pure white, at the corner of a field. Neither the locality nor the informant's exclamation, however, promised much, and no doubt the treasure would have proved something ludicrously different from any poppy ever born.

From that point, I say, there was no longer any question of fatigue; and in a little while the desired glen did come into sight on the right, offering us very easy access to the ridge up the fold of the fell, on one side all forest and on the other all open meadow. For a little while we rested here in a break of the glade, with the bushy Potentilla in indescribable beauty on every side in masses of pure colour from brightest gold to snowiest white, with every intermediate shade of cream and butter and canary and moonlit saffron, until one fell to bemused amazement over the terrible multiplication of species in the neighbourhood of *P. davurica* and *P. fruticosa*. How many are there in reality, in what relation does even *P. fruticosa* stand to *P. davurica*, and what ought in justice to become of the various newer ones of more recent years, such as *P. Veitchii*

and *P. Friedrichsenii*, which, to the casual eye of the collector, all seem to be constantly occurring between the orange and the pure-white extremities of what is apparently nothing but *P. davurica* all the time from one end of the scale to another. Unless, indeed, *P. fruticosa* and *P. davurica*, distinct species of twin-brother likeness but for their colour, both here occur, and give rise to endless hybrids, primary, secondary, and tertiary, to the confusion of gardeners and the multiplication of unstable species.

Fortunately the tourist need trouble his head about no such subtleties. He can just lie out his length on that pleasant small span of lawn, constellated with grey Edelweiss and with the bluebell-blue heads of the garlic, surrounded by rounded burdened bushes of the Potentillas, whether snowy, golden, or palest moon-light-colour, veiled here and there in a curtain of great upstanding, flat flowers by a big white Clematis,* beautiful and ample as some small *C. Jackmannii* at a show, while from the trees above the Golden Bell rings out its chimes. But at last it is time to rise and diverge up the lateral glen. In the gully of the fold one goes, through grass that rises to the knee, a surf of flowers in the midst of which rise mounded islands of Potentilla in domes of gold or snow, while across the stream-trickle on the fringes of the coppice glow the flaming butterflies of the Blood Poppy, and in its darker woodland stretches the ground is covered with a starry golden little ragwort whose leaves most presumptuously imitate a woodland Primula's.

As the climb ascends the Primulas themselves take their due part in the performance, and almost to one's thighs, above the luscious cabbagy rosette of dark lustrous foliage, tower the seed-spikes of that majestic

* *C. Fargesii.*

Primula which can only by grossest flattery or the rare chance of a fine form be called the Scarlet Hyacinth, accompanied more seldom by those of *P. Woodwardii*, and on the ridge above by yet another, still a Sphinx, only known in five specimens, and with flowers of pale yellow, a rare break in the cousinship of *P. nivalis*.* All these were over now, the heyday of the race being done, even in the Alps of Tibet, by the twentieth of July. But the hillside was independent of their help. Never yet in China, not even on Thundercrown, had I seen such a spectacle of alpine glory, such a sight to vie with the finest efforts of Moncenisio itself. A July glory, granted, and therefore coarse by comparison with the first awakenings of the Alps; but the splendour of it is not to be despised as one ascends higher and higher towards the notch of the ridge; for all over the vast hillside the sward is obliterated by a perfect tapestry of colours. Dark violet Salvias, myriads of lavender Asters, stand up amid moonlit drifts of lousewort, with globe-flowers of richer gold, and the silver stars of Edelweiss, and wide stretches of a creamy Morina with lustrous foliage and spiny spires of blossom. Geraniums, ragworts, garlics play their lesser part, accompanied by a plum-coloured spidery little Iris in clumps; and the finer turf is threaded by *Lancea tibetica*, whose small helmets of richest purple velvet squat tight to the ground amid their ample rosettes of leafage.

But on the very crest of the ridge appeared the marvel of all marvels, for while on the left was the usual bank of mossy ancient forest, falling away on the farther side of the fell, to the right the ridge continued

* Such a very large proportion of the seed collected as *P. Purdomii* proved to yield this species that it is clearly much commoner than we had supposed.

mounting in successive serrations of lawn, with little glades and dips of grass in between, coppice beginning within a few yards on the descent of the other slope. And all these dips and shallows and dishes and banks of lawn were brimming over with a perfect ocean of the middle-bear Aster, innumerably smiling with upturned pale-purple faces and twinkling golden eyes, while over their heads, up and down the distances, floated and flaunted the great expanded flags of the Blood Poppy, in such multitudes and such condensed magnificence as I never saw before or after, not even on the high lawns above Ardjeri. You come quite suddenly upon the sight the moment you attain the ridge; it makes you clutch your breast and gasp with its audacious and prodigal loveliness—soft violet, gold, and the most furious vermilion-crimson like illuminated fresh blood, blended in a miracle of colour over the harmonising green of the fell. I know what the Cima Tombea is like in the first week of June, and what carpets of colour Moncenisio unfurls in the last days of the month; but I have never seen anything to beat, and very rarely anything to equal, the best that the Mirgo Ridge can do with scarlet and lavender in the latest days of July.

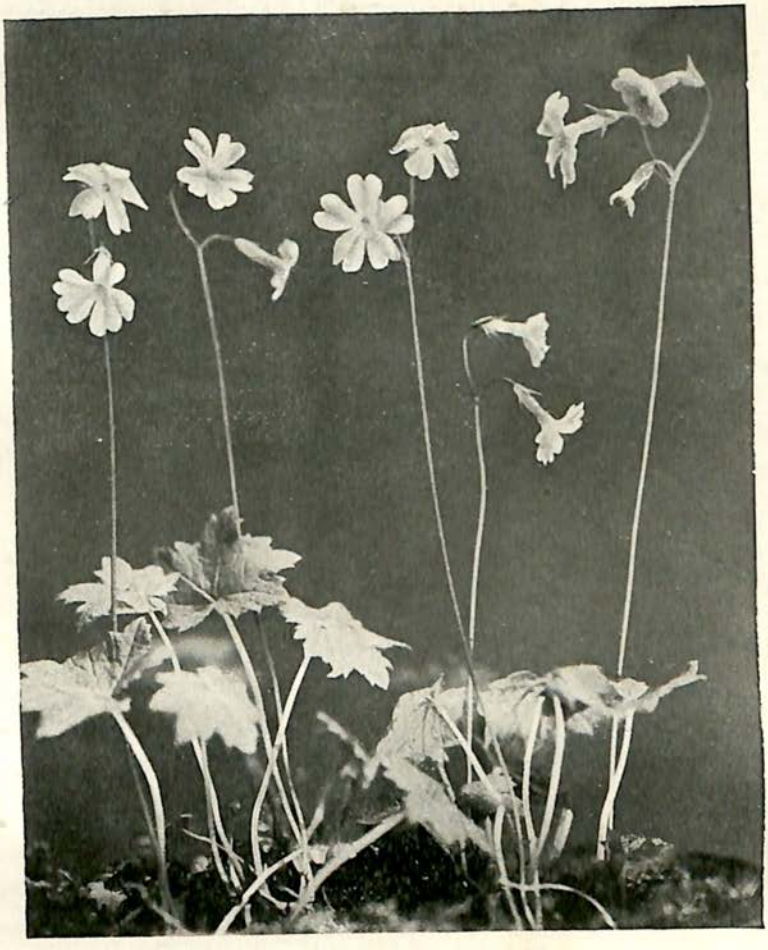
It was a sight to stupefy, and to hold all one's attention, despite the varied ranges of the world now inviting one's notice from afar. In point of fact, the Stone Mountains were not at home on this occasion, having closed upon the outer world their doors of cloud; and the poppies gave me no rest for contemplation as I ascended from dish to dish of the ridge, finding at each fresh level a greater wonder of beauty. I recked nothing of Purdom now exploring the depths of the little old stunted wood on the opposite side of the neck.

From the crest, indeed, when one has torn one's dazzled gaze away from the poppies, one can gain a full notion of this curious country and its curiousness, the clear-cut distinction, over the whole tumbled panorama, between woodland on the northward faces—even on the shortest and smallest of slopes, where trees immediately begin to spring—and bare alpine meadow on the southern, unbroken by the slightest shrub; so that the prospect out over these folded ranges has a wonderful box-pleated effect of light and dark, perfectly clean-cut and invariable. Looking south, you see all forest, wall over wall, with hints of green stripes here and there; turning south, you see an endless wilderness of bold green ridges, rippled into crests like the waves of the sea, with just a furry hem of darkness along their outlines. The sight is extraordinary, but the country lacks appeal, being so very huge and so very desolate, and so lacking in splendours of line or eminence or rock. One forgets entirely that here one is practically standing on the summit of Marmolata or the Cimon della Pala. Nothing suggests the altitude one has attained, and the ensemble of the empty chaos is at once wild and tame.

So that, dazed almost to weariness with the loud loveliness of the poppies, I was glad to return to the nick of the ridge, and there find Purdom simultaneously returning with his basket from the woodland. But what was it that he now revealed that set all my emotions revolving once more with unabated ardour? A new Primula, a Primula plainly as new to science as to my delighted eyes. *Primula alsophila* is Our Little Lady of the Grove, because she haunts only the dim and immemorial dusk of the uppermost forests all along the ridges of the Jo-ni Alps, where in the soft profundities of the moss banks, rich and deep with the

cool decay of a thousand years, she runs about with frail stolons in a most eccentric manner, and (with the aid of a paying guest in the form of a microscopic fungus who inhabits the thready runners) forms wide stretches of soft foliage, from which rise the delicate stems that each unfold a pair or more of innocent-faced, rose-pink stars of blossom. It is very greatly to be feared that we may well fail to make her a willing guest in our gardens unless we can induce the fungus to accept our hospitality also. How many of us, then, will be fortunate enough to contemplate the lonely little lady of those cold alpine forests as I immediately made haste to do that day, plunging into the twilight of the small, stunted, moss-grown trees, pine and Rhododendron, to where in the knee-deep softness of the moss-beds the Primula still twinkled rosy in the last days of her blossom, running about like a Pyrola in the same cushions with the Pyrolas themselves, *P. uniflora* and *P. rotundifolia*, the one as waxen and lovely with its sharp-scented, delicious flowers of ivory, and the other as suggestive of a gigantic lily of the valley as ever, far across the continents, in the glades of the Ampezzo Valley or the ancient woods of Lanslebourg?

After this no more emotions were to be borne, and as the day was now far spent, and the pressure of cloud becoming every moment more imminent, we departed from the Mirgo wood to the valley below, and thence addressed ourselves to the long downward tramp, which offered no adventure, but of which the final stretches from the river up to Jo-ni proved the last straw to the back of the wearied camel. In fact, ailing as I had been when I started, that trudge succeeded in knocking me up completely, and for the next week I was the helpless captive of my bed, powerless to assist



PRIMULA ALSOPHILA, SP. NOVA

Purdom in his negotiations and preparations for the start. There was a pleasant absence of event about these days, except when the dogs barked all night and the missionary baby howled all day, poor little soul, unable to express otherwise its disapproval of circumstances (who, hearing a baby, would not wish to avoid re-birth?); or when the wailing of trumpets and the sound of gunshots told me that the captive Wolves had met their fate on the green below the town. There were captured Tepos, too, it seemed, but it was held too dangerous to take any steps against them, and in due time a desire was expressed in high quarters that they should escape, which accordingly they were obliging enough to do.

In the evening storms usually brooded up, and the air grew full of deprecatory howlings from the population, anxious about the hay. As for me, the beauty of these storms gave me continued and dispassionate pleasure. One night I looked out. In the clear eastern sky over the rim of the huge down above the fantastic Temple of the Earth-forces (where the wizards of the aboriginal cult still have their honoured seat in a gorgeous temple with two curling-roofed towers) there came surging a snow-white dome of cumulus cloud, shot through and through with incessant internal blazes of white lightning that made the whole mass continuously and pulsatingly incandescent against the sapphire sky, yet never flashed into the open. There was no thunder, and as yet no danger; it came up in silence, and was hailed with no pious howlings. But at last it darkened and flowed wide in a long mass like a fell, and then the night became vocal with wailings against the hail it promised, while all the dogs of the town woke up to bark and the baby fell to screaming worse than ever.

At last, however, the negotiations of Purdom and Mr. Christie bore fruit, and a start was actually to be made. The Prince insisted, indeed, that the expedition should be conducted on lines of the strictest caution. An escort of twenty was to accompany us up to Ardjeri, and there to be reinforced by twenty more before we proceeded farther into the wilder and yet more dangerous districts higher up. On the twenty-seventh of July we duly set forward from Jo-ni in a pompous cortège, with me on Spotted Fat, who had by now recovered his feet. Down the long bays to the bridge and across into Tibet, and thence along down the far side of the Tao River we proceeded, between hedgerows luxuriant with honeysuckles, and the marble lily abounding in the brushwood on the river bank. Round rocky sweep after rocky sweep of the river goes the track towards the palace and hamlet of Bao-u-Go, which we had seen across the river on our coming up by the other road on the Chinese side of the water. The Tibetan is more picturesque and wilder, close to the bays and rapids of the Tao. The flood had begun a little to subside, and stranded on the rocks lay one of the wicked Tepos from Rou Ba. Now he lay very still, and a faithful dog kept watch over his relics. Such, at least, was my impression, until I drew nearer, and saw that of the sodden unrecognisable thing nothing remained but the strange skull and the open barrel of the ribs, with lank fleshless shank-bones extended at rest on the sand; while the faithful dog, in point of fact, was entombing the remains in the most efficient fashion at his disposal. It made one think of great Queen Jezebel. But it is thus that the Tepos prefer their funeral rites, and are cast into the floods of the Tao, when dead, to be borne wherever the river may choose to set them resting on

its shores. Among the normal Tibetans this practice is not followed. The holy and the wealthy are consumed with fire, and the rest of the people are laid out on the sides of the mountains to resolve into their component elements at the will of wind and weather and the wild creatures of the wold—a more clean and decent end for emptied flesh than to lie festering in earth, poisoning the subsoil for the survivors, and engendering death from death.

Bao-u-Go at length comes into sight ahead, lying snugly in a fold of the valley, with a high forested down rising behind it, and forcing the Tao accordingly to make a sharp bend away to the left beneath the projection of the precipitous bluff. A very pleasant place it is, and the palace a gay and gorgeous erection, with more courts and halls being still added, so that it looked as if rumour might speak truth in saying that the Prince of Jo-ni means to escape from his undignified position in Chinese hands in his own capital, and establish himself permanently instead in his Tibetan territory. There could be no warmer or more cosy place, with hills all round to cut off cold winds, and in front a fine view down over the smiling champaign beside the curve of the Tao, where farms and hamlets nestle among trees in a plain of golden corn, enclosed on the far side by the long line of cliffs up which the Chinese road had brought us to the loess promontory now immediately opposite. It is a luxuriant spot, too, with trees and rich hedges. The track leads straight through it, and towards the barrier of mountain, up to the notch where rolls the forest of silver firs, the way to the next valley evidently cutting boldly across, instead of lengthily rounding the headland.

As one mounts, the flowers and the luxuriance of the

vegetation increase. Ahead of me I suddenly saw a blossom of more brilliancy than any yet, shimmering golden in the overclouded day. And this resolved itself at length into the Sacred Body of Nalang, taking the air upon his pony, preceded by the acolyte upon another. A fine sight he offered as he came riding down through the lush tangle of lilies and pale-blue harebells in the hay, glittering in his golden robes, and shielded by a great red-lacquer hat like a Cardinal's, from beneath which he peered benevolently out upon the world through the huge horn-rimmed spectacles that Chinese respect for learning so insists upon as its outward and visible symptom, that anywhere within Chinese influence even the coolie in the field will try for a pair of spectacles, though they have no more than plain window-glass in them, or no glass at all. At the same time, it is highly incorrect to pass a friend in the street without taking off your spectacles to him; and as it is even more difficult to take off spectacles with grace than a hat, the courtesy resolves itself commonly into a mere gesture of intention.

Not even this, of course, could be expected from so august a person as the Living Buddha of Nalang, but we pleasantly passed the time of day, as soon as I had fully realised who was this unexpected vision beaming upon me from behind spectacles that almost entirely concealed his face. He had been visiting the monastery, it seemed, up there on the headland, towards which we now duly proceeded upwards. Steep goes the climb in the fold of the fell, full of scrub and flowers and the marble lily larger than I ever saw it elsewhere, but gaining nothing by the display. For it is not nearly so attractive when four feet high, with galumphing trunk and burden of some six or eight flowers, as when it is content with

its usual gracious stature of eighteen inches or so, which enables a graceful stem to carry its customary one or two Turk's caps, without being in the necessity of swelling to obesity. The opposite slope of the pass is covered with a beautiful dense forest of firs, which in late July are silvery as any form of *Picea pungens*, a lovely sight of frosted blue, though if they be of the same species that is blue in August about Chebson Abbey in the north, their earlier stages are of quite undistinguished ugly green, until the new shoots of the year have come forth unanimously in all their glistering frosted beauty. This fir, too, though plainly wild and abundant, is usually seen only at its best in the neighbourhood of the abbeys, owing to the prudence of the religious in preserving them; so that the sight of a close and flourishing woodland of them may always be taken as sure indication that there is some monastery close at hand. And so it proved here. Hardly had we reached the neck of the fell than up under the promontory headland on the left there appeared the hitherto unsuspected abbey, a rich and flourishing place of many curling roofs, and well-painted handsome churches, and monastic buildings clean and whitewashed and well-liking.

However, it lay off our road, which now proceeded along the other side of the hill through a delicious stretch of levels winding in the shade of the pine forest, till at length it emerged from the woodland and began its coilings down over the open slopes of hay towards the far depths of that clear green river which we had first seen winding into the Tao River on our ascent to Jo-ni, and to which we have now made a short cut across the intervening promontory. Rain began while we were traversing the lovely skirts and clearings of the forest, and there was no distant view up this new valley as we

began the long descent over folds of flowery fell, gay with all the late summer glories in the pasture, with multitudes of harebells particularly beautiful in their tall and stately complicated chimes of pale blue bells along all the branches of their stems, and enhanced by the silver hoar of their quaintly crinkled little leaves.* At last we reached the level of the blue clear river, and the pleasure of the day was only marred by the steady and increasing mournfulness of the weather, which settled in to a steady soaker as we proceeded upwards over lawns in which the Stellera stood thick in the grass, untouched by any browzing animal, on account of its veneficence, where all the rest was cropped. I had mounted again on Spotted Fat, and in dispiriting floods of rain the procession toiled through the soaked coppice of the river bank, and above a beautiful long series of deep ghylls and cañons through which the green water went roaring and racing in a surf of snow between the rocks.

A little higher up, and we came to a bridge by which it was necessary to cross. It was a typical Tibetan bridge of poor class, arching high over the stream at the narrow point of a combe, and in no very good repair, with the rails all gone and half the planks also. So that Purdom's pony disliked the look of it. He got off and led the beast across. I meanwhile, no attendant being immediately at hand to do the same for mine, sat philosophically quiet on Spotted Fat, waiting on his mood. If he decided of his own accord that the bridge was feasible, I would let him proceed; otherwise I would not urge him, but would wait till the Go-go came up. On no account would I be bothered to get off and tug him across, and then undergo all the

* Adenophora.

miseries of mounting on a soaked saddle. However, all went well. Spotted Fat sniffed at the bridge for a moment, and then began solemnly to advance step by step, picking his way delicately from rickety pole to pole. Beneath me, far down between the gaps of the planks, I could see the boiling, ice-grey water of the churned torrent, and in my ear there was a general roar. And suddenly I became aware that Spotted Fat was sidling out towards the unprotected edge, in evident disapproval of the vacancies between his feet. A paralysis possessed me as I felt his hind-quarters swinging out more and more perilously. Purdom's frozen face of horror advancing to meet me remains photographed on my mind as the last thing I remember ere, incredulous to the last, I was conscious of a stumbling subsidence behind me, a splintering crash, and there was barely time to release my feet from the stirrups in a spasm of instinctive prudence before Spotted Fat and I, no longer one, but two, were falling, falling through twenty feet of emptiness, and down into the glacial abysses of the river.

Down and down into the icy water we sank, and as I slowly mounted through the depths of grey glare it seemed as if I should never emerge again to the light of day. When I did so I was already below the bridge, being rapidly borne down stream towards that engaging gorge, whose charms I now envisaged from quite a different standpoint. There was no swimming possible, and no struggling. Heavy mountain boots held me so deep and upright in the water that only in intervals could I get my mouth above the current, and a heavy macintosh encumbered all my movements. From this, in a spasm of rage, however, I immediately released myself, and away ahead it sailed towards the ghyll,

precursor of my own doom; while I myself impotently floundered and bubbled in the tide, being smoothly and quite passionlessly swept onwards at the pace of a rapid train. Desperately I struck out at each rocky headland as it raced into sight, and raced away behind me again out of reach. They came and passed with the uncanny quick elusiveness of nightmares, seeming to be held out only to be withdrawn again at once, like things slid in and out on the wings of a theatre. I could study the Primulas in their crannies as they fled blandly by.

My latter end was already plainly in sight, but no high and holy thoughts possessed me, as would have been proper, nor any panoramic vistas of memory. Instead, I was consumed only with rage over so ignominious a conclusion, a rage that even extended to Purdom, who meanwhile was hopping along from promontory to promontory with cheerful smiles and shouts of encouragement. The least he could have done, I felt, was to jump in and perish also, as the dramatic exigencies of the moment demanded; or else what is the use of Victoria Crosses? Yet there he was, still on terra firma, grinning like a grig, if grigs do grin. Spuming and burbling I drove onwards to my solitary death, each instant lower and lower in the water, each instant lower and lower in spirits, as each of Purdom's futile attempts to stretch me out a hand from the flying promontories fell short. Spluttering my indignation to the high gods, I was whirled straight towards the race, and abandoned hope; when suddenly I felt the point of a rock beneath my toe. Frantically I sought lodgment on it, but could not stand against the flood, and in an instant was torn onwards, only immediately after to come to rest as ignominiously as any dead

Tepo, on a long wide shallow where not so much as a kitten could easily have drowned. Purdom, in fact, had all along seen this quite inevitable rescue, and the whole drama was dissipated. There was nothing for it but to waddle tamely ashore like a duck, in fits of laughter, with my breeches bellying out in tight balloons of water. Only the Go-go a little rose to the heights of the situation, for he now came running up with his face gone pale to the colour of bad mud, and his eyes standing out as if on stalks with terror. As for Spotted Fat, that prudent animal (whom the Go-go now proceeded to condignly beat* till ordered to desist) had swum straight ashore without the slightest effort. Had I clung to his tail, instead of thinking myself so clever for dissociating myself from him in time, I should not have had a moment of trouble or suspense as to my ultimate destiny.

Fortunately it was now raining so densely that it had been a mere work of supererogation anyhow to take that bath. Purdom went ahead at a gallop to secure quarters, and I trotted along behind afoot as fast as I could between the dripping hedgerows; and had the satisfaction, as I splashed through the lengthy narrow lakes into which the weather had now turned the lanes, that I had already, at one go, got as wet as anybody ever could, and therefore need not fuss about picking out the shallower places of the pools. In my own self I felt not a penny the worse, but the far fall and the impact on the water had given me a curious dotty feeling of light-headedness, and so mysteriously affected my eyesight that the only things I could see

* I have never yet, I believe, split an infinitive in my life; here, for the first time in my experience, I fancy the exigencies of rhythm and meaning do really compel me.

were those I did not look at. So onwards I trudged and ambled through the valley-levels of lush grass and coppice, and at dusk grew aware of beckonings and yells from a hillock of lawn high above on the left, where a lateral glen came down to join the valley. This was my summons to our destination, and up the slope I clambered, accompanied by a benevolent-looking, elderly official with a yellow waistcoat and a very *déplumé* pigtail who here blossomed mysteriously upon the scene like a flower, and proclaimed himself the special emissary of His Highness, appointed to provide for our comfort. Glad indeed I was of this conclusion; I had been finding the long green windings of the valley endless, chill was laying hold of me, and the beautiful glen was altogether depressing in the weeping darkness of the gathering twilight, to say nothing of the fact that the nailless soles of the shoes I'd now adopted floundered flatly in the mud of the path with such delaying effect that, on every three steps I made, one must have been lost in my incessant slitherings. What a comfort was it, then, to quit the wet world, and find myself sheltered at last in the warmth and snugness of a rich Tibetan farm.

I cast off all my sodden garments immediately, and swaddled myself in the vast warm volume of a white duffle gown produced by the landlord, enveloped in the folds of which I squatted deliciously over a charcoal pan of beaten copper on the dais of the guest-chamber. These rich Tibetan farms are, indeed, the snuggest of steadings, once you have penetrated through the door into the interior of the box. First there comes a dark passage with rooms on either side and rooms overhead topped by the flat roof of the lower story; then you come out into the light of day again beneath the tower-

THE UPPER ROOF OF A TIBETAN FARM

ing frontage of the main building, with its upper galleries of carved wood, and side-rooms stretching round in two wings, to enclose the flat roof of the lower story under which you enter. This lower roof serves as a drying-ground for grain and so forth. The rooms on either wing are inhabited by various relations, or made over to hens and agricultural implements, while here also are the family beehives, tree-trunks sawn asunder and hollowed out, and then put together again, with a hole in their side through which the bees incessantly bring their burdens of pollen for the confection of what must surely be the most delicious honey in the world, scented with a thousand alpine flowers. In the main building up above, fronting over the inmost court below, are other big rooms, and invariably the chapel, neat and clean, with flowers and holy water renewed before the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas (only try to imagine a European village where each farm should have its private chapel as a matter of course!); while, built out at the side from the extreme corner of the block, in a big square tower, stands the no less invariable shrine of Cloacina, such a contrast from the stinking higgledy-piggledyness of Chinese devotions to this deity. The main building's lower story, facing on the dark entry through the passage, contains the principal room of the house, the enormous kitchen, very often taking up all the length of that face of the edifice, with only the guest-room at one side, a small, pin-neat chamber panelled in pitch-pine, with a dais, and a fire-pan, and holy texts upon the wall.

The kitchen is a huge and sumptuous sombre place, dark with the smoke of many generations, and illuminated by the light streaming down from above through the latticed paper windows, which kindles to a rich glow the lines and lines of beautiful old copper vessels

in which the heart of the housewife rejoices, and which have been in the family from father to son longer than memory of man can calculate. Tall coffee-pots in shape they are, and hot-water jugs and milk-jugs and teapots of flaming copper, with traceries and belts of brass in bands of convoluted runes, set often with twinkling sparks of coral or turquoise. All along the room stretch these shelves of heirlooms one above another in a wealthy house, and their well-kept metal gives an opulent glow to the dusk of the long high hall. But the supreme treasures of the family are the cooking-vats. These are gigantic vessels of beaten copper, with rounded bottoms, built in, up to their projecting median rim, into the clay oven-bank that runs half-way down the room, often with three or four of these splendid things in a row, standing high above their bed in straight-sided, tall circles of burnished metal, repoussés with birds and fishes and roses and other emblems in three or four bands of decoration. These are of any age you may like to believe, and have been made only at Durgé and at Lhasa. Their possession in a Tibetan family is like that of a Romney in one of ours, except that the Tibetan is far more adamant to all question of sale. Why should he not be? Why should he part from his heirlooms?

In point of fact, these Tibetan steadings, tucked away into the luxuriant folds of the Alps, are richer and more self-contained than any others that I know. There is no calculating their patriarchal wealth and their yearly income from the huge herds that graze the hills. They have no outgoings, or very few, and lack altogether that passion for display which is the essential meaning of European "civilisation," and lends such a point to money-grubbing. These people are rich, and even very

rich indeed, but they have nothing to show the fact in, and consequently no desire to do so. Culture has not inspired each farmer with a passion for going one better than his neighbour in the eyes of the world, for training his wife and daughters to feathered hats and the piano-forte, or for downing his neighbour with a frontage of six windows where the neighbour has but four. These high ambitions, this spirit of noble emulation is the fountain of the commercial and "progressive" spirit. The remote Tibetan lacks anyone to show off to, and consequently cares nothing for the show of wealth.

Madame of the farm may be a grubby little old lady in one brief leathern petticoat, and muddy buskins over her muddy and grubby old legs; her hair may hang in countless plaited elf-locks on either side her wrinkled winter apple of a face, beneath her ancient round cap that might do for a scarecrow; and all the time she may have wealth enough to buy up Broadwoods, and dress from Ospovat's. Yet nothing whatever to show for all that money—except comfort and happiness. And these facts are brought home to one by the amiable but perfectly inflexible determination with which she will refuse even to ponder any suggestion of a price for her pots and pans. She has no need to sell; she has no wish to sell. What is the use of talking? In fact, only the break-up of a rich family in the death of its last representative affords you your one chance of obtaining good specimens of old Tibetan copper. Such an occasion comes but very rarely to your hand, and even then the nearest monastery has first claim on all the stuff, till only the second-best is left; so that you may go far before you acquire one of the noble old water-jugs, and yet farther before you can have the least hope of one of those copper vats, so precious that never yet has one

come into Europe; and it was only by rare luck and big disbursements and months of negotiation with owners, heirs, and abbots that at last I succeeded, through Purdom's indefatigable diplomacies, in acquiring not one alone, but two.

The rain held good the next day also, and we stayed snug from the deluge where we were. The Mee and the Go-go, wandering over the hills, brought back only common stuff, with a pallid big Aconite and Delphinium. However, they also varied the menu with wild strawberries, though not so abundant as those which delighted us at Siku, and were as much enjoyed as the small cucumbers also produced by that blessed little place. The wild strawberry of the Tibetan March is inordinately abundant over all the open hillsides and fallow fields of the lower alpine region. It is not a peer to its brother of the European ranges except in beauty, where it stands much higher. For the seeds are set in such deep pits into the fruit that each strawberry has a honeycombed effect, and the consequent lights and shadows of rose-colour have an extraordinarily living effect, as of a carving in some sunlit rich coral. These charms are counterbalanced, however, by its firm adhesion to its green frill. Before we could enjoy our bowlfuls at Siku the whole staff had to sit in a row at a table, like schoolboys over a task, diligently plucking off the strawberries from their receptacles.

CHAPTER XVII

THE STONE MOUNTAINS

THE next day we duly bade good-bye to our stout little square-built hostess, who looked about three feet high, and descended the hillock to the river valley again in face of a lovely characteristic view up another lateral valley opposite, where immense blank blocks of houses formed a hamlet at its mouth amid tall silver firs that ascended the neighbouring slopes in walls of woodland, while behind rose high green rugged ranges; and in front, at our feet, lay the beryl-blue river in a wide curve round a long plain of lawn, in which the intact Stellera stood up from the cropped grass in myriads of round-headed tiny bushes. The sky was grey and the air full of a steamy dulness as we wound onwards and onwards over lovely plains, and through hanging tangles of soaked blossom, very lush and glorious, though offering only the common fry of this alpine hay and hedgerow. High crags came at last into sight ahead of us, and real naked rocks, with promise of more, and farther, on all hands, as we advanced towards the head of the valley, rounding bay after bay of the hillside, a solid golden sheet of mustard, like blazing sunlight, against the sombre folds of forest opposite; until at length we came upon Ardjeri, a little tumble of houses behind a knoll tucked into a fold of the glen, with huge alps and ridges and gorges and cliffs opening up in every

direction overhead. And here, having found quarters in the headman's house, less solidly splendid than our last home, but none the less very comfortable, I strolled out along the crest above the village and lay down on the flower-enamelled turf amid bushes of the Potentilla like so many glowing mounds of gorse, to watch for the belated procession of Purdom and the cavalcade.

When it came it was with news of trouble and tiresomeness. For now appeared the full wiliness of His Highness. He had allowed us to come up here under escort, indeed, but that escort was strictly charged on no account to let us go anywhere we wanted. The soldiers, in fact, had orders to accompany us to Ardjeri, and not to go a yard farther, or to let us out of sight, or to go into camp anywhere in the open. Yellow-waistcoat was His Highness's emissary, and showed an inflexible front. Days went by in agitated discussions, and the only ray of hope seeming to lie in the notion that if tents were provided, the soldiers, unprovided at present, might perhaps be coaxed and wheedled into camp up in the wild land, messengers were sent off post-haste all the ninety miles and more to Tao-jô to hire them of the missionaries, or anyone else available. This meant dallying for some days in Ardjeri, but as the weather was in bad mood, there was no harm done in waiting for it to clear. Besides which, we thus had time to explore the neighbourhood. Ardjeri nestles under the convergence of deep valleys and wild gorges on all sides, from which the clear blue becks come brawling deep in their dark chines and cañons under walls of forest. The main valley drives leftward, while from the right, out of the flanks of a huge rocky mass that towers overhead, descends the wildest of all the ravines. Purdom one day rode off up the main valley

to prospect for a camping-place, while I set forth to explore the combes and fells above the village, accompanied by the Mee and the Go-go and two soldiers of our escort—to give them an honourable title not deserved by their appearance, brawny ruffians that they were, in ancient sacking, with long-pronged arquebuses across their shoulders.

Up the glen immediately behind the village we went, amid the shallows and willow-groves of the ripples at first, and then into a wooded glen-bottom lush with tall jungles of a great ragwort like that of the Satanee range, but inferior, though fine to see all along the edges of the rills, and in and out among the white or golden hay-cocks of the Potentilla. The coppice grew more and more luxuriantly lovely as we gradually ascended under pinnacles and spurs of rock, in the shady slopes of which were woodland Primulas, while in and out of the copse there wound arcadian glades of lawn, dewy in the damp grey morning, and entangled with sheaves of flowers, among which occasionally appeared a rare specimen of yet a new Primula, with lovely round-faced flowers of blandest soft pink, which seemed here to be a stray and an exile from its proper home, perking in the river-shingles, and now and then in the opener places of the track.*

But soon the glen closed in upon us on either hand, and we entered the sombre zone of the alpine forest. In the dense and silent darkness we pursued our upward way through the woodland, in what was now only a deep gully in the fell-flank. The track grew more and more uncertain of itself, and for a long time played peep-bo

* *P. gemmifera*, Batalin, thanks to its very bad diagnosis in Pax and Knuth, long hailed as *P. acclamata*, sp. *nova*, particularly abundant much farther north, in the Da Tung chain.

with us among tangles of shrub and piles of fallen tree-trunks, till at last it gave out altogether, and we had to pick our way as best we might amid the dark and soaking jungle, which was now no better than a bath in the steady rain that had developed. Finally I grew weary of struggling through the accumulations of dead and living brushwood, broken only by stretches of deep primeval moss-banks in ripples along the woodside, or smooth stretches across the floor, where the Lady of the Grove, in wide carpets, was passing out of flower. Through the crashing surf of the shrubbery, then, we tore our way down into the buried trough of the beck, and up again on to the bare open down of lawn the other side, ascending steep as a house in rib over rib and spur over spur towards the green ridge so far above that it seemed to be crushing us in; above which yet again soared up the first buttresses and masses of the mountain.

Slowly, and with the many pauses that the altitude provokes, we toiled steadily up that enormous hillside amid soaked swathes of grass and flowers—Edelweiss and Aster in myriads, and a bewildering choice of Primula capsules standing up sturdily on tall stems; *P. Purdomii*, *P. Maximowiczii*, *P. Woodwardii*, *P. tangutica*, and the elusive Unknown, no doubt, who proves a pale yellow version of *P. Purdomii*. Gradually, as we climbed, the sky began to clear; and by the time we had mounted to a hunting-track that runs at a gentle slant all along the face of the down far overhead the day was growing genial, and the distances appearing. Following the track, we traversed flowery fold after fold of the fell, and so came on to a rocky neck, with coppice of dwarfed willow and glossy Rhododendron, and that one Caragana which delights the Alps with

pea-flowers of clear pink, enhanced by green opulent foliage all along the ferocious thorny branches. Here among the scrub I sat to munch a biscuit and contemplate the distances unfolded before me on the farther side. The view is enormous, and of a green desolateness and grandeur impossible to convey. Far and far the eye ranges over a land absolutely empty of life, with two glittering threads of river winding away deep in a wilderness of folded emerald downs away and away into the No Man's Land of vast dolomitic peaks and spires, just discernible that day beneath the lower level of the long splendid cloud-banks that veiled the majesty of the Stone Mountains. But there were still far heights above us to ascend, and after a while I rose from my couch among the fluffy yellow globes of garlic that here fill the high alpine lawns, and addressed myself to the first cliff-spur that led up to the main mass from the col.

Very delicately lovely was the bluebell garlic in the clefts of the limestone crags, and the citron Primula among Isopyrum, and the silver flat scabs of *Androsace tapete*, and a wee honey-scented thing like a little white forget-me-not with a yellow eye; and there was also a tiny Primula, out of flower, that did not seem *P. scopulorum*, and which I believe is no form of *P. stenocalyx* either. Upwards I dived and plunged through a bath of sopping Rhododendron, the chief novelty a gracious small alpine Aconite of six inches or so, with only a few large helmets of pale soft blue. Above I found another crest, with another dip beyond it, and then a further scramble amid scrub up to the base of a huge moist cliff, inhabited by all the usual children of the high limestones, with the Celestial Poppy flaunting in thorny spires of azure from the precipitous ledges, while over

all the intervening moorland slope wavered the violent scarlets of the Blood Poppy amid fat seed-stems of Purdom's Primula. On the damp earth-pans, too, beneath the cliff I came first on the Welcome Primula,* here really at home, and very different from its anæmic exiles that spring in the valleys so far below, washed down by the waters of the becks in spate. Here it is in character, and its straight stems inimitably combine elegance and strength, while its stout round flowers stare straight out at the world with a comfortable look of rosy geniality.

Now there was a small traverse to be made to an upper scree of the cliff-face, and so quite easily to the summit of the first mountain-mass. But from this, a crown of fine lawn interspersed with cliffs and pinnacles, I came for the first time into view of the real and unmistakable summit, a splendid bluff castellation of cliffs some five hundred feet higher, and about a quarter of a mile away, towering up from a deterring deep dip and ridge of grass. For a long time I lay about in lazy hesitation, delighting in the now perfect glory of the day, and disinclined for more toils; until, spurred by conscience, I called the Go-go and advanced to the attack of the final wall. We found erelong a shaded gully behind a spur of the precipice by which a stairway of rotten rock gave a steep but satisfactory way to the top. This proved the true top, too, as I had hoped—a knob of brown moorland turf, starred with myriads of golden-eyed purple Asters amid a general snowfall of that fluffy little white knotweed whose oval fluffs bedeck the Tibetan highlands so lavishly in August that all the alps look as if peppered with an early fall. Even though the Stone Mountains still lay sullen in

* *P. gemmifera.*

cloud in a wall of darkness across the distances of the south-west, the view from the top was superb. For this rocky mass is the first advance-guard of the alps, and has neither rival nor neighbour; tremendously dominating the enormous surf of green ranges that foams and ripples regularly across the world, taking rich tones of blue and soft distant colours away in the direction of Jo-ni in the north. Only one other peak stands up above the waste of fells. This, though, is yet more eminent than the outcrop above Ardjeri. Far away it rises, shooting up from a huge high ridge of perfectly bare red shingle (with a high, humpy buttress of scree on one side) in so magnificent and abrupt a needle of limestone precipices that one can only think of it as the Matterhorn, whose defiant splendour it so carefully reproduces. Indeed, as I lay and watched its rose-grey beauty shrilly aspiring in the golden radiance of that afternoon, there were moments when I felt it might even be compared with the mountain of all mountains, which is, of course, the Cimon della Pala.

It was time to return through the mellowing glory of the day. The Go-go and I made a good scramble down the face of the cliff, finding an easy couloir in the sunshine. On the crest I rejoined the crowd, and a moment of tense excitement now ensued. For suddenly, as we sat about and chatted, on the cliffs from which I had just returned there appeared stalwart figures armed with arquebuses—clearly marauding Tepos out for blood. However, after a good deal of running about and shouting and gesticulation, it appeared that these martial apparitions were merely some of our own escort up from Ardjeri, like ourselves, to see what sport they might get in the crags. So in restored calm we waved hands and yelled greetings, and then all proceeded down

to the original neck, where we now, instead of dropping into the folded darkness of the glen beneath, continued following all along the crest of the fell, gradually descending through dips and glades and folds of the arête in a luxuriant garden of late summer flowers, with Purdom's Primula quite obviously preferring, when it could find them, the flatter and sedgier glades of coarse turf. On these downs, if I am right, there are no fewer than five big Primulas in the glorious group of *P. nivalis*, to which *P. Woodwardii* belongs and the Red Hyacinth adheres. They show you here their full character, and why it is that this whole cousinhood is so hard to please at home. All these Nivalids are large, luxuriant, lush creatures, with fat root-stocks and corpulent cabbagy rosettes of foliage. They enjoy the roughest competition with the vulgar tangles of the mountain turf, which provide their roots with something to struggle against, and also with a fibrous sponge to absorb the superfluous moisture. Not that, in growing-time, these luscious growths will not gladly take all the water that the heavens afford, and ask for more, but on the folds and flanks of the alp, in a tangle of grass-roots permeating a rich cool soil, their drainage, even in the wettest summer, is sharp and perfect, and they have nothing to fear of the clogged richness that so promptly corrupts them in cultivation, setting their fat root-stocks decaying at the neck.

But the long grass in which they grow serves yet another end of even more importance to all the Primulas of this group. For in autumn they die down, and long grass dies dry on top of them in a dense impenetrable thatch, on which next comes the snow to lie also, thus giving the dormant crowns a double protection of absolute dryness. Here, then, they sleep a perfectly

unbroken sleep throughout the dead months until the snow vanishes, and then immediately amid the sodden tangles of the pale grass-wrack appear the pushing foliage-rosettes, glossy, fat, and bronzy-purple in the Red Hyacinth, sharper, stiffer, more folded, and of a dusty white with meal in Purdom's Primula. It is so, then, that I wonder whether culture may not have better hope of keeping these glorious creatures in health. The riddle has always been to keep them watered sufficiently, yet sufficiently far down not to worry the stout neck, so sadly susceptible to damp; and, above all, to insure absolute rest and dryness throughout the winter. If snow would only come and stay in our climate to order all would be well, or if we could afford underground contraptions to freeze their bed solid from the end of September to the opening of April. As things stand, however, it might be worth trying whether good, well-drained soil on a sharp slope of dense coarse moorland grass might not make them more permanently happy than any more luxurious treatment—at least, in the cool alpine regions of England and Scotland—especially with the essential precaution of throwing a tarpaulin over the sedge when it has died down over the dormant Primulas in a thick rain-cloak *à la Japonaise.**

A few more days elapsed eventlessly before the donkeys returned with tents, and news that Jo-ni was once more in a turmoil, the Tepos having very obligingly announced that they meant to wipe out the missionaries at Rou Ba Temple on some convenient date between the ninth and the sixteenth of August. By this news every lonely steading of the March was set in renewed

* Later experience makes me doubt if these suggestions may not entail a supererogatory amount of fuss. I doubt if Purdom's Primula requires them, and I am sure the Red Hyacinth does not deserve them.

fear; for once the Tepos move, there is no telling what they may do next, or what point they will attack. It might also have been expected that this would throw yet further difficulties in the way of our wish to move up to camp in the alps. But Yellow-waistcoat suddenly collapsed into a surprising amenability before the firmness of our front, and professed himself quite satisfied when he heard that we did not propose to camp actually in the immediate track by which the Tepos might come crawling through the gorges, but in a grassy glen away up out of the way to the left concealed by coppiced folds of the glade. With the usual suddenness all clouds disappeared, and the escort was ordered to prepare for an early start the next morning.

In rousing heart, to the loud carolling of songs, the cortège duly set forth; and lest an escort of forty sound unduly pompous and formal, let me add that it was composed of the local farmers and herd-boys, a jovial riotous mob of every age between six and sixty, clothed in what looked like derelict sacking, and each carrying over his shoulder a long-pronged arquebuse. In a ragged stream we descended to the bridge and up into the main valley on the left, while in our van waved a Union Jack that had arrived the night before, and quite clearly contributed largely to the general serenity of spirit, being regarded as magic of the most powerful and fortunate description. All roads of Asia lead to Lhasa, and the advance of the Union Jack thus boldly through the sacred and forbidden land towards its far-off capital might well have made a diplomatic incident. However, this innocent invasion of Tibet aroused no comment, and our army rallied gaily to its alien standard, unconscious of its sinister associations.

Upwards we proceeded in a lovely valley-bottom of coppice and glades luxuriant with Asters and tall violet Salvias, with little lawns of lavish blossom here and there, under a noble hanging forest above us on our right, all along the mountain-side, plumy at first with the Red Birch, which ultimately gave place to larch. The left side of the valley was all green grass, of course. Occasionally there were narrows of cliff, and short gorges, wadings of the blue water, and scramblings along the wooded flank of the fell. But most of the way was uneventful in its pleasantness along the green or sedgy levels beside the beck, with Purdom's Primula, fat-headed in seed, arising proudly here and there above the tall lush grass or tussocked browning sedge. Overhead higher and yet higher mountains hove in sight, and it became clear that we were making straight for the Matterhorn peak. It was now a land absolutely empty of life; not even the rare trilling cattle-calls of the lower valleys any longer met our ears from the lush slopes, where no herd-boys or red-cheeked Tibetan lasses dared adventure to pasture their kine. The folds of the hills seemed wholly empty of humankind, and though at one point high up in an unsuspected pocket of the fell there *is* a tiny alpine steading, it proves merely a smoke-grimed hutch where two grubby ladies keep ward over the herds on summer.

The next lateral glen was ours. Up out of the main valley we turned, ascending a little rise that concealed the mouth of the glade in which we soon found ourselves —a pleasant sheltered vale flowing down from a huge and glorious wall of green mountain, *mamelonné* with innumerable rounded outcrops of cliffs. The floor of the glen was of rich lawn, and an embracing spur of grassy rib climbed behind us up and up to the mountain

behind, while on the other its twin rib enclosed us in a face of dark forest, from high above which there peered down naked pinnacles of dolomite. Here we set to work encamping and posting our forces. The first thing was to clear away the trees and coppice for a good gunshot distance all round the camp, for fear Tepos might take advantage of the covert to squat up there and pot us at their ease down below. With the trunks and trees and scrub thus collected we encircled the whole camp in a high and broad zareba, behind which we ourselves could advantageously take cover at need; and then the various tents and posts of sentry were arranged with the nicest eye to tactics, and every man appointed his place in case of attack. At the top of the rectangle stood our own tent, unfurled upon a floor of Edelweiss and golden Saxifrages, and protected behind by a small Tibetan wigwam in each corner. Two more of these held the lower corners, and a little higher, to one side, was the immense marquee that had been sent up for the accommodation of the main force, with a smaller tent fronting it, across the opening, for the headman, and a yet smaller one adjacent to our own in which the puss-faced cook had sole possession, uncurling his bed among the boxes of provisions, while the rest were rehearsing their manœuvres amid shouts of laughter and jollity.

These warlike preparations accomplished, I climbed up on the grassy steeps above and surveyed what I could of the mountains impending over the wall of forest opposite, while at my feet, tidy as a thing in a map, lay the plan of the camp and its dotted tents. From this point no hint can be gained of the Matterhorn, but immediately overhead, at a huge height, you see the naked red shoulder of shingle which stretches off from

it; and beyond, a vista of wall over wall, in vanishing softnesses of blue and purple in the grey day, of stark limestone precipices, imprisoning the river down in their heart in a succession of sombre gorges. In the clearing dusk, a little later, we went down to see these. In the twilight they were of a huge impressiveness. We went first along a luxuriant strip of hay, where my Aster filled the whole scene with flopping-rayed flowers of purple eyed with vermilion; and then through a soaked stretch of coppice, the track being no more than a chain of lakes after the deluges of the last few days, with the Blood Poppy drooping pensive here and there in the glades. At last we came to the entrance of the gorges, close to the shadow of titanic cliffs, from which the bluebell garlic floundered in delicate flufferies of blue. It was a waste of stone, fallen blocks and boulders choked up in the moist depths of the chine, with the Celestial Poppy shining in uncanny azure brilliance through the gloom, and in the mossy twilight beneath the little coppice a tiny Primula not to be deciphered. A few hundred yards of these preliminaries bring you abruptly to the end, the sheer-walled strait of darkness that holds the clearness of the river so tight that there is room for nothing else, but immediately from the brawling luminous pale water rise blank on either hand the dark precipices of limestone plane above plane, seeming to converge overhead, and making the gleam of the river, gained from the opener glen some half a mile above, seem yet more ghostly in the oppressed and dank obscurity.

This is the gate of the Stone Mountains, and beyond it lies only the inhospitable hopeless wilderness of the Tibetan Alps. In its cliffs hang Isopyrum and silvery wads of Saxifrage, but flowers and all life seem mis-

placed in that ominous and brooding place, which holds the secret of the hills between its jaws. On the edge of the ice-blue torrent we stood, and saw that the secret was safe from us for yet a few days to come. For the stream was quite unnegotiable at present, in such a spate from the recent rains that neither man nor beast could attempt its furious races. If it thus kept the Tepos from coming down its course to attack us, it equally prevented us from going up on our peaceful invasion of that wild land which is neither the Tepos' nor anybody else's. It only remained to wait, and make a dash for it later, when the flood should have subsided, in a happy hope that more floods would not again supervene while we were up above the gates, and thus cut us off from our base at the mercy of such marauding forces as might happen on our seclusion in the uncharted chines of the mountains.

So we returned to camp, and night came down on the alps, lending a ghostly life to the remaining dark little trees on the slope above, till they looked like so many lurking Tepos in the dusk of the moon. But the hush and mystery of the enormous mountain silence that filled the glen with its presence was cheerfully broken by the Homeric watch-fires that blazed all night in the angles of the camp, centres of so much jollity and story-telling and laughter as might have advertised our presence half across Tibet. In the morning grey darkness rolled all along the brows of the mass at the head of the valley, and greyness pervaded all the world. However, on persuasion of a clearing, and making "no doubt it would be a very fine day if only the clouds would clear off and the sun stay out," I duly set forth, with the Go-go and the Mee on my trail, to attack the main mountain wall behind, while Purdom

went off up the other rib towards the Red Ridge with a view to working round so as ultimately to join me on the arête, which from below looked as if it must be continuous. Up in the bed of the glen we went, and the glossy Rhododendrons were wet as any bath as we fought our way through their embraces, and at last won out into an opener glade beyond, immediately at the foot of the first cliffs, which, however, barred our direct advance by a cirque of limestone precipices like Malham Cove on a gigantic scale. Down this the beck of the glen descended in a long swaying *Staubbach* from a dark combe up above, which evidently gave access to a lap immediately under the final ascent, but which was obviously unattainable by such direct methods unless one had had the wings of a dove.

Accordingly we diverged to the left, ascending diagonally up over enormous slopes of deep hay that to-day was sopping as a lake; to say nothing of the fact that now the rain began, in a fine Scotch mist that promised patient permanence. The meadows were all a silver haar of wetness as we swished upwards through their jungled luxuriance, leaving behind us a bruised wake of green in the general hoar-frosted whiteness of the hay. In this there was no new thing to delay us, and in the initial precipices to which we at last attained there was no new thing either, though all the old friends. By a succession of steep screes and scrambles over little bluffs of broken rock, with Spiræas and Potentillas sprouting in their crannies, we now reached the top of the first tier of cliffs, and found ourselves in the lap of meadow above the precipice of the waterfall, with the main wall of the mountain rising straight behind in vast size and volume, till it lost itself in the clouds. The Blood Poppy was all over the place here in the long

grass, hanging in sullen glory under its load of raindrops. I came on a tuft of seeding poppy, too, that had a difference, and kept me wondering for a moment, until I looked up and saw that impending slope above vanishing into dark vapour overhead, and embarked once more on the task of wading through the surf of the soaking hay towards its immediate foot. Round the enormous bays of the mountain we proceeded in an interval of easy going, enlivened by memories and blood-blots everywhere of the poppy amid a bewildering show of other hay-flowers, and the usual sheets of rose or citron or crimson that are perpetually staining whole hillsides of Tibet, but prove on closer inspection to be only goggle-faced louseworts, without stability or character —fat, flimsy splendours without proper rootage of their own, the fungi of the floral world.

Down the straight flank of the mountain from the unguessed heights in the clouds descend the various runnels and torn ruts of earth by which the alps pour away their rainfall to make the streams below; and up the likeliest of these we now mounted. It was like a long stairway, and a steep one at that. No repetitions can ever properly convey to you a sense of the scale on which these Tibetan alps are built, and the hour of steady climbing that it will take you between cliff and cliff, which from beneath had seemed two small boulders within a stone's throw of one another. In these higher reaches the long luxuriant herbage of the lower slopes is replaced by finer lawns, and the flowers, therefore, are different and more abundant. Far down below now are the seas of rosy or saffron lousewort, and the scarlet poppies wavering over the ocean of soft purple Asters. Now the steep and topless bank, fading dimly into the pallor overhead, is a stairway of soft turf

bejewelled and iridescent with the rain, and sparkling everywhere with crowded flowers. Purdom's Primula was long over, indeed, and so was the Red Hyacinth; but their Tangutic twin* was lingering towards her end—so really ugly, with squinny stars of greenish chocolate on her tall fat stems, that the eye is glad to ignore her, and pass on to the Primula that holds the field in early August on these highest lawns. It is the Welcome one, innumerably smiling at you up the slope as you toil, with her cosy pink round faces above the turf. For here, centering as usual in the bare runnels and earth-pans, she is so happy and luxuriant as even to flow over into the grass, and fill the whole lawn with her radiant bravery amid a dense mosaic of little purple Asters, pale golden Saxifrages, tumbled Gentians in masses of softest water-blue, and the silver stars of Edelweiss in perfect galaxies upon the green amid the softly celestial fluff-balls of the bluebell garlic, which added yet another note to the kaleidoscope almost confusing in the grey quiet of the pervasive rain. And then suddenly, in the crying chorus of colour, so radiant in the white driving gloom of the cloud, I caught a new note in the orchestra.

Towards the first bent head I toiled with pants, and saw that over that strayed clump of seeding poppy below I had not wondered idly. For here was a new species—a species not only new to me, but, as a glance told me, new to science also, up to the latest date of publication.† These high certainties are attained by very

* I believe there is no real specific difference between *P. tangutica* and *P. Maximowiczii*, fluctuating states of one ugly species universal all up the Northern March.

† *Meconopsis Psilonomma*, sp. *nova*, the "Unique Eye," which blind Œdipus at Kolonos accused Kreon of having stolen in carrying off An igone.

simple means. All important families, such as Primula or Meconopsis, are compiled into a sort of "Almanach de Gotha" of their own, in which every known member is fully and scientifically described. Thus the collector has the means at his disposal of knowing the character of every Primula or poppy he finds, and is as little likely, if he knows his business, to be mistaken over the difference of a new species as any competent Maréchal de Cour over the precedence of Princesses. At a look he can see that the plant before him corresponds with none of those described in the monograph which he carries imprinted on his memory, and the only clog upon his contentment and certainty in hailing a new species is that perhaps, since he came out upon the field, the monograph may have been put out of date by the publication in some botanical journal of recently discovered species in the race, of which his own cherished discovery may perhaps be one. This qualm alone controlled my raptures as I gazed upon my find that day. In grandeur and opulence the Lonely Poppy takes high rank above the Dainty Poppy, to whom is still left the pre-eminence in small and dainty grace; for the Lonely Poppy on its single and always solitary stem bears always only a single purple flower, whose great head, when bowed by rain, makes one think immediately of *Anemone coronaria* in the flower-fields of Southern Europe. It is a glorious thing to see in those high meadows of the Tibetan Alps; and I never saw it anywhere else, or on any day but this. No doubt but it has many other homes on those untrodden downs, but it was remarkable to find how limited a space it occupied on the green mountain-wall above our camp, though so abundant from eleven thousand feet upwards to the final arête, that now among the general jewelwork of

THE LONELY POPPY. MECONOPSIS PSILONOMMA, SP. NOVA

the shimmering lawns it made quite a dappling of rich violet blots, its stem of six or eight inches aspiring above the rest, and its noble blossom modestly declining in the rain instead of standing erect in its usual bravery of expanded beauty. In the final arête it is yet more splendid. Almost all other flowers have ceased except the Harebell Poppy, which here looks anæmic and feeble beside its radiant new cousin; and the ridge runs in steps and ripples of dank raw earth overhung with a thatch of soaking moss and matted Rhododendrons in brownish autumnal tones. And here, in all the opener lips and edges, shine the flowers of the Lonely Poppy, more imperial than ever in rich purple against the white pallor of the fog, upon their background of dull vague tones of brown and green.

Long before we reached the ridge, though, we were lost in a pale bath of cloud, and in the luminous obscurity all the flowers of the slope gleamed with an uncanny radiance. The last pitch is steeper than all the rest, and attains what one's groping explorations ascertained to be the culminating arête by a stone-slope full of the Celestial Poppy, which leads up to the final rocky cliffs and outcrops of the actual crest. Hither and thither I roamed and scouted in the gloom, but of new flowers there were none, and an icy wind pervaded the cloud along the summit, which undulated and divagated so puzzlingly that at last I determined, as any meeting with Purdom was now plainly out of the question, to descend to a lower zone, where at least we might see something of where we were going, even though the rain might be more powerful under the cloud than in it. Accordingly, with pride in my choice of a spot, I began descending; hardly had we emerged dimly from the cloud-belt than I saw before me, far below, a valley

unlike any I had known, and heard the remote roaring of unseen streams in the heart of a country wholly desolate and empty. I was carefully coming down on the wrong side of the ridge. Up into the cloud I must needs climb once more, and cross over on to the right slope, down which I was glad to hasten out of the shrilling alpine wind that lashed me to the bone with the fine wire of its rain in the white heart of the fog. Quite jaded by this time with the celestial maces of *Meconopsis Prattii*, like little pillars of pure dawn against the shingle, I raced down the slopes and out of the obscurities of the arête. Gradually the descent won through at last into cleared weather, and through the veils of the rain I saw the valley mapped out at my feet, and away down in its lowest stretches the camp. All the way the rain pursued us, and the cloud never lifted along the whole wall of the ridge. I found the camp secure and quiet, and Purdom ere long returned triumphant from his expedition, too. We sat and wondered over the passionless persistency of the rain, which seemed as if it saw no reason why it should ever leave off. Nor was there, much. Small wonder if the heavens were weeping, and the wide earth sodden with tears. It was the fourth of August, 1914. We saw no significance in that date, however, and only considered that those tears of heaven would keep the gate of the gorges impassable.

This being so, I seized the next opportunity of a decent-looking morning to ascend on the track of Purdom's expedition up to the Red Ridge on the right for a glimpse of the little lovely alpine Geranium which he had brought down from the topmost shingles. Above the wooded slope opposite the camp climbed the way, and thence up the huge buttress descending from the main ridge overhead. Up the crest of the rib we went,

climb over climb, from hump to hump, and thence across the vast fell-face, through wavering jungles of the Blood Poppy, to a stretch of easy going along the neck that now led on to the foot of the Red Ridge itself. High above us still hung the raw redness of the great arête above a wall of Rhododendron scrub. I rested awhile to look out across the placid glory of the world, which from here is all a crinkled map of emerald grassy folds, just tipped and hemmed with lines of furry darkness from the forests on the farther side of each fold. And now we must assault the Red Ridge. Stark was the scramble through that tough and matted scrub, and as stark the climb up the scree-slopes and earth-pans that led to the shoulder, and yet more stark again the toil that led us at last to the real crest, unseen from below but towering far above the first red shoulder that had looked like the summit from beneath. Along the turfy lawn of the arête I strolled at last in rapture, luxuriating in the day. For though cloud banks cut off all the high tops of the view, the colourings of the blue and green remote distances only came out the more radiantly lovely beneath their sombre veils of vapour, lifting and dipping and swirling along the crest in diaphanous hoverings; and peeps came staggering out of the mist occasionally of a huge dolomitic peak in front along the crest that could be no other than the Matterhorn itself, wavering in the cloud-wreaths as I have seen the Cimon della Pala float and waver into visibility from the stony slopes of Castellazzo; while far away to the right there developed in the sombre violet of the cloud-levels glimpses of rugged terrible pinnacles approached by many miles of desolate crumpled downs and valleys of green.

There were many flowers, too, to illuminate the ascent.

In the fine turf of the actual crest, a knife-edge strip, shone the pearly tiny eyes of *Androsace chamæjasme*, and the curious rusty-crimson stars of a rather dingy Potentilla flowering in panicles of tiny blooms; and in the steep earth-slopes of bare red loam or shale there was abundance of the Welcome Primula shining amid azure-blue pats of a cushion speedwell, while a big-flowered chickweed rambled through the glairy earth with frail threads of dark metallic foliage beset with noble saucers of blossom, from snowiest white to a faint glow of rose. It was not, however, till I attained the actual crest that I saw the Geranium down below me on the right in a waste of russet stone. Down from the saddle of springy turf I slithered feverishly over the screes to where all the wide wilderness of shingle and scree was tufted and carpet bedded with this new treasure. No other plant or flower was there at all; the Geranium fills the whole stage with its profusion of large and very pale pink flowers springing all over the close and matted tufts that ramify through the shingle. The Silver Geranium dots the lawns of Baldo with its gleaming, hoar-frosted carpets besprent with pallid dog-roses. No other in the race gives the same picture of this Tibetan treasure, turning the gaunt shingles at twelve thousand feet to a crowded dance of its faintly flushing blossoms, silvery in the cold pale air that day I saw it, and dense upon the concise and comely clumps. But the Silver Geranium likes the soft emerald stretches of the turf, while its cousin of the Tibetan alps grows only in the dreariest places of desolation, where nothing else can have its home; nor does even the Silver Geranium grow in such multitudinous profusion, nor show anything like that abundance of blossom with which this lonely loveliness sheets the naked shingles in a shimmering veil

of pinky pallor in August. The name, indeed, is the unloveliest part of this elfin beauty, for it is said by some to be a mere form of *G. Pylzowianum* from the meadows below—an opinion from which I at present dissent on many grounds, and not least on account of the marked differences of the two plants in their seedling stages. *G. Pylzowianum* abounds also in the alpine fields of the Da Tung chain, and was first recorded from Chebson Abbey and the Halls of Heaven. But nowhere in those parts could I ever come across this high-mountain species or development, though by now I know the way between Tien Tang and Chebson almost as well as that between Hyde Park Corner and Piccadilly Circus.

Beyond the shingle-sweeps of the Geranium the slope of the arête gets steeper and less stony, though no less barren. Here a big Primula luxuriates in myriads, and is clearly related to the Oread of Thundercrown, though here, in a new centre of distribution (it must not be forgotten that Thundercrown is the last lonely outcrop of the Min S'an, alike botanically and geologically), this concurrent species or form is of stature so much stouter and larger as to suggest at once that it is a distinct species, as its rather different seedling foliage goes far to prove. The lack of its flowers, however, some weeks since passed over, was compensated in August by the multitudes of bluebell garlic that set the shingles dancing in a fine glimmer of blue, amid which shine even more magnificent than ever the huge purple daisies of the little bear Aster, perhaps only a high alpine form of *A. limitaneus*, but of quite distinct beauty, with its immense golden-eyed flowers on delicate slight stems of three inches or so, springing from the ramifications of its rootage through the chaos of stones, not densely, but widely, among the scree to

which it is confined, and at the highest elevations only. Its violet orbs and the china-blue softness of the garlic make the loveliest of foils, too, for the presiding beauty of these gaunt altitudes. For all the shingles are full of the Celestial Poppy, tight and massive, and unvaryingly blue (in these parts) as the sky of a frosty morning, quite unnatural in its shrill crude loveliness of living light, as the spikes stand stockily up in bristling independence all over the huge desolation of the scree.

More and more desolate, indeed, becomes the scene as one mounts the arête, till at last the ridge turns into a jerky series of naked limestone gendarmes and bluffs, from one to other of which you have to scramble cautiously, with an ever-increasing depth away below you of russet stone-slope sweeping down to the far-off beginnings of grass on the upmost downs. Ahead the overpowering phantom of the Matterhorn swam nearer and nearer in the clouds at the top of the crest, and I hoped I might find myself at length at its immediate foot. The cliffs and bluffs were here a Tom Tiddler's ground of silver and gold, with little mounded humps of the bushy Potentilla that sprouted in every cranny, and were now so many unbroken gouts of colour in that grey world. But suddenly my advance was hopelessly cut off, and the ridge lost itself in a break of unnegotiable precipices, with precipices on either side, too, that barred all access to the curving neck down at the feet of the cliff; which led on to the base of the Matterhorn, now seeming to impend over the ridge, a dim bulk of darkness in the dark of the clouds, and descending on the right in a gigantic spur of sheer limestone, so as to enclose on the other side the bay beneath, of rosy scree-wastes jewelled abundantly with the blue of the poppies, as even from my heights above I could divine with

unaided eyes, scanning the sweeping waste with the fierce fear of leaving some new treasure undetected.

However, there seemed nothing new, either to field-glasses or bare eyesight, nor was there even any sure means of getting down to that neck; so after long wistful inspection of the cavernous cliff-walls opposite, where there hung Primuloid masses of some sort that were no doubt only *P. citrina* (while the surf of azure that swept up to the feet of the rocks was as obviously only *Myosotis sylvatica* in fine alpine form), I decided at last to renounce the struggle, and delightfully retraversed the screes of the Geranium, and then down and down and down the grassy fells, getting my pockets all cram-full with the fat ripe pods of the Blood Poppy, as delightful as Tulips to snap off from the tall strong stems, realising more than ever that these peaks are mere outliers from the main chain, and of no such connected geography. For from the Red Ridge it had been evident that at least one deep dip of brushwood intervened between it and my arête of the other day, so that vain would have been my hopes of meeting Purdom, even if mist and storms had not prevented.

Our expeditions were now overclouded as the weather. For, conscious of what was happening now across the globe, the high gods wept over the world in floods of inconsolable tears from dawn to dark, and all we could do was to keep our tents, and compose the troubles that broke out among the staff. Old Yellow-waistcoat next added to our difficulties, too, by appearing on the scene from Ardjeri, bringing with him as coadjutor an opium-sodden young blood from the immediate entourage of the Prince (who has made himself very unpopular in the eyes of the Chinese Government by turning out all the wise old Council of his predecessor, and replacing

it by a crowd of youthful choice spirits like himself). They brought urgent and even passionate letters begging us on no account to go farther than Ardjeri, already left many miles behind down the vale. No doubt old Yellow-waistcoat had gone off with the tale of our movements to Jo-ni, and this was the result. However, here we were, and here, therefore, we had every intention of staying. It was impossible not to be vexed with the importunities and deviousnesses of Yellow-waistcoat, but no less impossible to help admiring the zeal that was now condemning him to endure a perilous uncomfortable alpine camp, and everything in life that a Chinese most utterly abominates. It soon became necessary even to protect him from our staff.

For, interfering with a view to peace between the Mee and the Go-go, who were squabbling over the specimens, he was overtaken with the usual fate of the peacemaker, and the cook's account of the controversy did not deal adequately with the Go-go's part in it, enemy to the Go-go though he was. However, the truth of the situation soon disclosed itself, and the Go-go was caught in the act of smashing the old gentleman's opium-pipe, his last hope of comfort in these inhospitable wilds. Swift as lightning came retribution; swift as thunder came the Go-go's tears. From my seat in the tent door, where I was painting a flower, dismal wailings caught my ear, and I was aware of the Go-go, escorted by the whole crowd, in convulsions of acute bellowing, like any smacked child, roaring with the wound to his feelings rather than anywhere else. To the cook he foolishly came for consolation. The cook, who had met the same fate on a previous occasion, now had regained equality, and showed perfect consciousness of the fact, receiving the Go-go's plaints with a cool and acidulated satisfac-

tion that yielded no balm to the sufferer. Him we now summoned into the tent to assist at the development of plates, and for more than an hour the darkness was broken by eruptive sobs and snatches of accusations about "old Mee," cut short by gulps of grief. However the lamentable scene so restored Yellow-waistcoat's "face," and put him thereby in so good a temper, that he no longer opposed any of our plans. The gorges lay open to our pleasure when that of the weather should permit.

And in our time the caravan set forth, leaving a sufficient force under the Mafu to guard the camp. In a clear dawn we trusted ourselves to the gloomy depths of the ravine, and waded on and on up the river, while the overpowering walls of dark precipice overhead echoed and re-echoed to the carollings with which our escort cheered its chilly way up the water, hopping and splashing gaily through the fords. Again and again, some nineteen times in all, we had to ford the torrent or ascend in its course, so tightly does it fill the channel, swirling from side to side of its enclosing gorge, and leaving a narrow strip of shingle now on one side and now on the other. For many miles the ravine is continuous, though not monotonous. After the limestone stretches end you enter defiles of the most curious rounded conglomerate, reddish and extraordinarily ugly, bulging up in boss over boss, with the suggestion of titanic sugar castles that have been melted with rain; while on the left from time to time the sunlight far above us illumined steep glades of forest descending in successive ghylls and gullies from the roots of the Matterhorn away overhead. There was coppice, too, in the torrent-depths, and lovely swirls under the juts of cliff, where the clear blue water creamed to whiteness; and little

shrubberies along beneath the darkness of the walls, where in their mossy green skirts the Welcome Primula had established itself from its alpine home on the open heights above, and here gleamed rosy in long drifted colonies that seemed to shine yet more cheerily than ever on this sombre background in the twilight of the ravine.

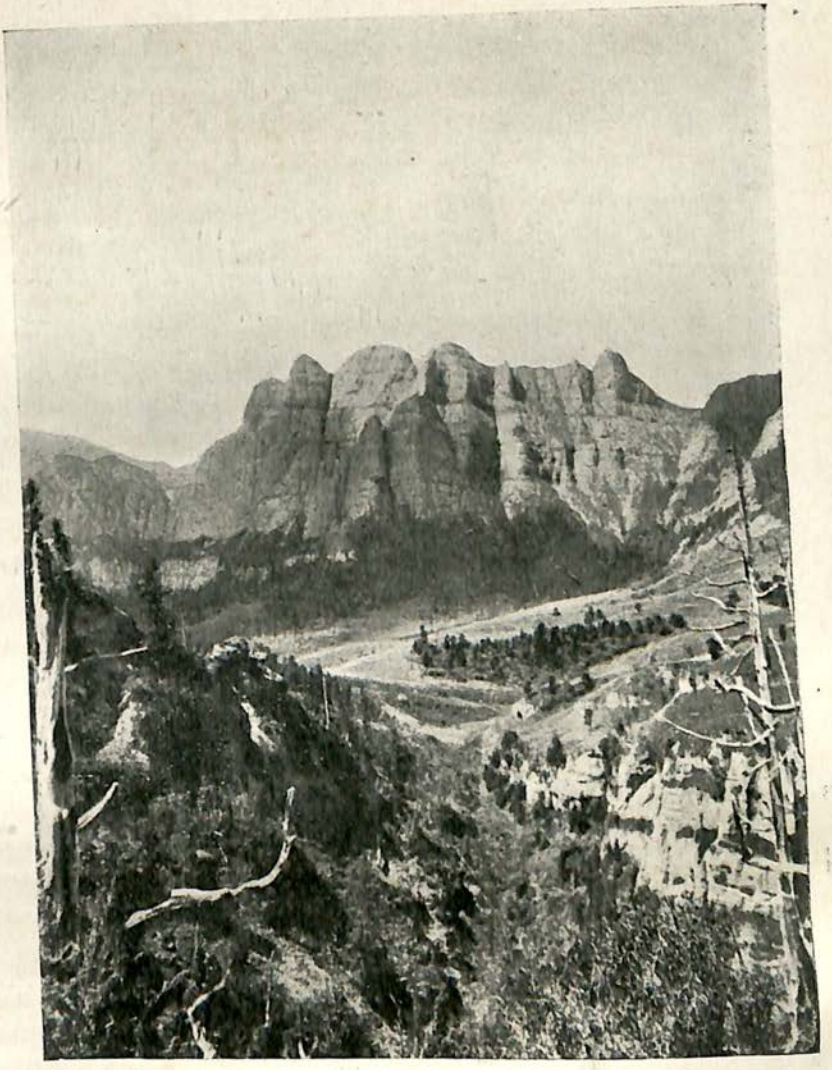
But so tight is the long defile that it soon became evident that this could not in reality be one of the habitual Tepo roads into Jo-ni land, as represented. No habitual road could run in a series of gorges that a few hours of rain will close—a specially fatal objection in the eyes of a raiding tribe, whose chief danger is that of being cut off from its retreat. It was very long, in fact, before we saw the Tepo road. If you go far enough into the bowels of the hills, a track leads upwards in a tiny steep torrent-course, as it might be one of the miniature *Schluchts* under the eastern face of Ingleborough, and comes out at length upon an upper level, from which a steep climb through brushwood brings you out upon a wooded crest in full command of the country in all directions. It is a strange new view. Behind, undiscoverably far down, lie the gorges, lurking in the labyrinthine depths of the hills. On one side roars into the air the full splendour of the Matterhorn, deployed from crown to base in all its architecture, from the long slopes and glade-couloirs of coppice between lowest buttresses of the base, to the upland lawns and folds of grass among the precipices from which springs the huge lateral hump, like some artificial heap, the work of Titans, thrown off from the main peak, which thence towers away naked into the blue in an obelisk of stone. Next to this, across the gorges from the Matterhorn, stretches all along the prospect

a wall of Alps, woodlands, and mighty sweeps of green, and voluminous fans of scree from the lonely ridge itself, which culminates at regular intervals in three vast pyramidal peaks of bare rock.

The nearer landscape is much softer, filled with rolling fields of lavish luxuriance, almost English in their undulations of rich green, dotted with forests of fur, where the beaters might easily in due time be getting to work, were it not for the reminder of present realities afforded by the huge castle-masses of russet conglomerate that hedge in all that view with a rampart of fantastic rounded towers and bulging precipices towering one above another to the wild summits of long rounded domes and humps and hummocks of bare redness. All around their feet are dips and hollows of woodland, mainly Juniper; and immediately in front a very deep chine of moist dark precipices shuts you off, entirely, all along, from a high upland that fills the distance before you with its slow smooth hog's back, as it might be some Scottish moor on a gigantic scale. If you dare the profundities of the trench beneath you, and the arduousness of the corresponding emergence to the light of day on the other side, it will take you long to reach the crest of that fell, and then you will at last see the real Tepo road, a broad and beaten track running outwards round the far side of the Matterhorn mass, instead of attempting the gorges. From the crest of the down there is a far broken fall towards a country wholly different from this—a country of huge masses, indeed, and ups and downs, but comparatively tame, and without alpine bulks to correspond with the tremendous wall of the Stone Mountains, which from here dominates the world away in the right. A forest of stone, indeed—" Min S'an " or " Bei Ling "—in wild

aspiring pinnacles like frozen flames. Here, in fact, is the main break in the range through which the Tepos come, and where milder country offers better welcome to humanity. Away in the south-east the chain resumes, after this wide interval, to conclude in the ultimate height of Thundercrown. But these huge fells and plateaux of moorland offer little to the botanist. Their richest prize was the common frigid Gentian of these ranges, like *G. frigida* on a fine healthy scale, with handsome panicles of straw-coloured trumpets, which here is in such fine form that from afar a bunch suggests some harvest of pale Tulips or other exciting bulbous production.

So we arduously return down into the depths of the deepest gorge, and retrace our steps to where a lateral stream of clearest crystal blueness ripples into the main torrent from between close walls of rounded rosy conglomerate. Up this stream, in the lapping, tugging currents of it, the caravan must now pursue a long and winding way, unable to guess any direction until a corner is turned, and we are seen now to be heading straight back towards that wall of limestone with the three pyramids, and advancing up a wooded glen in the fold between two of them. Quite unexpectedly, after splashings through the beck, here dwindled to a mere rill in the dense coppice through which we were tearing our way, we came to a little dark ghyll of narrow damp cliffs, and found ourselves arrived at the hunter's cave which was our destination. A cave, indeed, it cannot fairly be called. A huge boulder has fallen away contiguous to the underhung cliff; overhead, from cliff to boulder, had been woven a canopy of dried fir-boughs for the rare huntsmen who come here after the Tibetan elk. Here, in the shelter and shade thus



"THE NEARER LANDSCAPE"

afforded by trellis and precipice, there is a steep gully of shelter where the citron Primrose luxuriates, and offers the most suitable of beds for the botanist. Here, then, my bed was unfurled, and the rest in the undercut of the cliff.

The remainder of the day passed in exploring the enormous green slopes that ascend to the heights above, as soon as you have emerged from the darkness of the little gorge round the corner, where the stream babbles, palely gleaming in the gloom (with strayed spires of the Celestial Poppy flaring azure in its shingles, and the citron Primrose crowded as its English cousin, in the dank grottoes and silty moss-grown hollows of the cliff) to where, beyond, a grove of tall Junipers dissembles the beck-bed amid sedgy brakes, with Purdom's Primula standing tall in the coarse tangle. But now you climb out of these comforts upon the arduous ascent of the fell, bump over huge bump of the vast rib conducting you at last to the scree-couloirs, and so in due course to the broken arête, which forms a double row of teeth, with a grassy glade of shelter in between. The afternoon showed us the lie of the land, and some of its inmates, and likely directions for the morrow. Towards the sundown we returned to the gîte, and were soon at rest beneath the enormous silence of the alpine night, with a great silly-faced moon sailing white across the velvety vault of sapphire, and flooding the folded darkness of the woodlands in a ghostly haze of powdered silver so beautiful that surely Alice's dormouse could no more have slept under it than I did.

Betimes we rose and made our way up towards the ridge, in a dawn without a cloud. We did not go up through the ghyll by the gîte, having already scanned the slopes here converging between the second and the

third of the peaks. We now struck round, so as to attack the mountain between the first and the second peak. Up along a sedgy glen we proceeded, and at its head had a long pull up a wall of Rhododendron forest so steep that we had to tug and haul ourselves up the mossy drops by the long ropes and loops of the trailing boughs, with occasional delicious intervals of pause, in some sun-dappled interval of the darkness, to gaze out over the widening radiant world below. And so at length we came to the top, the crest of a buttress flying off from the mountain in a succession of dwindling pinnacles and crags, with firs and Junipers clinging to their crazinesses in compositions as fantastic as you may see among the islands of Matsushima or the ancient masterpieces of Chinese art. Here we diverged, and Purdom, escorted by retainers with the camera, went off over the saddle to where a wooded dell led to the neck between the first and second pyramids, while I continued up the buttress to the cliff of the ridge where it projects at the angle of the second pyramid. *Potentilla ambigua*, or something suspiciously like it, shone in sparks of gold on its rambling bed of green at the foot of the cliffs. The Primula was there, and the Geranium, and the Celestial Poppy in the precipice-face; otherwise I could come on nothing new, as I explored the gullies and bays and gorges that complicated the base of the cliff, until at last my heart stood still, seeing a tight mass of Primula wedged into a cranny. But alas! it was only the citron Primrose, at this high altitude venturing out on to the open rock, after the fashion of so many species of cool shady places in the alpine zone when they ascend to the high alpine; and gone so compact and small, accordingly, that now I rightly anticipated that in just such form should I find

the xeromorphic little squeezed specimens at Petrograd on which alone is based the existence of *P. flava*—which is in reality, as I firmly believe, no more than a development, rare and poor and outlying, in the starved bleak mountains of the upper Hwang Hor, of my own plant, the much finer and more luxuriant Primula of the Min S'an, first seen by Purdom on the similarly outlying Lien Hwa S'an in a wizen form intermediate between the sparse miserable occurrences of *P. flava* and the full flourishing expansion of typical *P. citrina*.

So, finding no novelty, I decided to ascend to the crest, and, seeing a possible place, proceeded upwards on the cliff-face hand over hand. It was like going up a long ladder. And quite before I had expected it, we were suddenly over the edge and out on the summit-wind, in full command of the whole prospect over the Stone Mountains, clear from end to end that day, though enhanced by volumes of magnificent cloud that accumulated over them with a view to storms in the near future. Many miles away still lie the Stone Mountains, stretching across the world from easterly to westerly in one unbroken rank of impregnable eighteen-thousand-foot dolomite needles, crags, castles, and pinnacles. It is a marvellous and uncanny prospect, over that smiling land to that frowning conclusion. The whole of this vast world of glittering rivers, green lush downs, and placid vales is absolutely and eternally virgin of man. No cattle graze those hills, no huntsman penetrates them, no human being sets footprint there from age's end to age's end. An everlasting solemn emptiness broods over the scene; all that void yet vivid distance seems a sacred precinct to the mountains that guard the horizon.

On a gigantic scale the Min S'an recall the Rosengarten Dolomites as you see them from Klobenstein or the Rittnerhorn. But here the distances and altitudes are all so incomparably more vast; and the profound hot gorges of the Eisak and the Adige stand in no relation to the sweeping downs of green emptiness that intervene between the intruder and the far-off Min S'an. And if King Laurin haunts his Rose-garden, what strange gods of an older world have their lair in the thunderous heart of the Stone Mountains? Perfectly pitiless and impregnable they are; not even snow can lodge on their inhospitable flanks, unless in some deep ghyll or couloir. They are naked as Truth, and almost as unattainable. Two gates or gaps in the range alone give access on east and west to the land of terrible peoples beyond. Into the trackless desolation of the main chain no explorer could hope to penetrate, indeed, unless with a caravan, impossible of transport in a district so wild, to provision him and his in the lack of all else; to say nothing of a full complement of holy Bishops to deprecate the anger of those lonely inexorable mountains and their inmates. For the Min S'an, a tossing hedge of pikes and minarets, gives more impression of insatiable ill-temper and austerity than any range I know. Darkness is always brooding along their sullen brows, and even the streams are afraid, and flee away as fast as they can, leaving the Min S'an to stand as the dividing line, the watershed of all the rivers that flow south to help the Yang dze Jang, and of all those other rivers that come away northward to add their weight to China's sorrow in the Hwang Hor.

The arête of broken scar limestone, so like so many that I well know, were it not for its huge size and dappling of tight little white or golden dumps of Potentilla, here

culminated on the right in a huge pyramid, presenting to me none but unnegotiable sheer precipices, with terrifying unfathomable chines falling away below; so I lay on the crest awhile surveying the prospect, and feeling glad that in these northerly regions the flora is wide and constant, so that the foothills of the Min S'an probably present samples of all the alpine treasures offered by the main range, for assuredly no expedition could hope to establish itself long enough in those far wilds for any thorough investigation of the Min S'an themselves. Meanwhile I grew aware of Purdom, microscopic away down on the tilt of the scar to the left, flapping in the black folds of the head-cloth as he bent the camera over some prize, while the attendants stood round in a ring with kilts expanded, to try and shelter him from the gales that drove along the crest. So, in hopes of some novelty, I anxiously waited, only to hear, when at last he hove within shouting distance, that he had merely been occupied with the Celestial Poppy. This, however, gave him an excuse by differing in form. Usually its foot-stalks are short, so that the spire has more or less the effect of a fairly solid spike or dense mace of blossom. But here the foot-stalks of the individual flowers are much longer, and the flowers rather fewer, so that you get a very starved-looking, drawn-out effect of lankiness, otherwise not differing from the normal type, unless that the stems are usually of a bronzy darkness. These considerations did not, however, take up our time on this occasion, for we were quite sufficiently occupied in prospecting for a way up or round the great pyramid that barred our continued progress to the right. Between us and the mass itself intervened a difficult gorge, while all the precipices that guarded the summit would

evidently on this side prove hopeless to all but competent and well-provided alpinists. Our only hope was to recross the crest, and see whether we could not negotiate the blocking bulk on its north-eastern face. This we did, scrambling along the ledges, and thence down a dank chimney till we came to the roots of the pyramid in the ridge, and thus got easily round by level stretches of Primula and Celestial Poppy, and emerged successfully upon the arête-saddle on its farther side. And there, in the scree-slopes of russet tone we saw the little bear Aster shining more lavish than ever, while those hassocked lumps on the highest height of Thundercrown now revealed themselves, over the earth-pans of the crest, as the seat of a lovely brilliant little Potentilla, shining in close constellations of gold, tight over its hard footstools of lucent emerald foliage, glossy and fine and cloven and curly, till it resembled that of some concise and neat little alpine Saxifrage in the group of *S. Wallacei.*

But the ridge now toiled up in height over height on the right of barren russet shingle slopes beneath the little central strip of lawn. And here all old friends and recognitions were wiped from memory by a new beauty. Close upon the iron-red desolations hovered low the most glorious of solitary-flowered Delphiniums, in huge blossoms of richest Czar-violet, with black-tipped white eye, and a furry whisker of snow and gold to the purple lip.* Through all the shales of that grim thirteen-thousand-foot ridge it rambled and roamed, and flaunted over the face of the scree like a flight of

* It develops a disappointing stature so far in cultivation, and its blossoms approach suspiciously towards the beauty of the Da Tung larkspur, from which my original painting shows them so completely distinct at home.

THE STONE MOUNTAINS, FROM THE RIDGE OF RUSSET SHINGLES

sombre settling butterflies, attracted by the sweetness of the other inhabitant of those austere stones, in colour and contrast the most acute and lovely that could be desired to the imperious purple of the little larkspur.

For the home of this is shared by another of the lark family—a lark's heel, or fumitory, if you want a hideous English name, or Corydalis if you prefer the charming scientific one. *Corydalis melanochlora* is one of the loveliest of my novelties. We already had a guess of her from that glaucous Corydalis leaf that I first saw unfurled, without flower as yet, in the screes of Thundercrown; but now the foliage, fat and like a fleshy round-lobed fern, of texture as succulent and steel-blue metallic tone as marked as any Echeveria's, lies unfolded everywhere on the naked rosy shingle; and close in the midst nestle the voluminous heads of big-helmeted, long-spurred flowers in pure white, with lip and cowl of intense relucent azure, light or dark, with a central touch of black, and an entrancing fragrance to complete its charm. Few of its race, too, can have a wider range, for, first occurring to us on Thundercrown, and evidently general in the highest alpine stony places of the Min S'an, it is hardly less abundant, and perhaps even more so, in the uppermost shingles of the Da Tung chain, three weeks' journey up in the bleak north. Though the Geranium of these ranges is also reported thence, the Delphinium of the Stone Mountains, whether *D. tanguticum* or a new species, seems to cease here, and no more to be seen in the Da Tung, where it yields place to a cousin, larger and looser in habit, indeed, and more complicated, yet its superior in massive splendour, and hardly inferior in alpine charm.

From here the crest ascended very steeply to the right still, towards the second of the big pyramids,

almost equidistant in the curve of this isolated high chain. In a strip of fine grass it mounted and mounted to the summit itself, sinking away sheer on either side in cliffs aglow with curtained golden cushions of the little Potentilla, or long screes of grey or russet bejewelled with the squatting azure and white heads of the Corydalis, amid the huge hovering butterflies of the violet Delphinium, and the Asters, and the garlics, and the Celestial Poppies, and all the smaller fry that turned those lifeless places to so inexpressible a shimmering sparkle of gay light colours, with the imperial purple of the larkspur giving a deeper note among the rest. Suddenly the ridge culminated in a big mountain-cap of softest green turf, starred with Arenarias and the frigid Gentian. And here we soon saw that we had reached the term of our wanderings that day, for on all sides this pyramid fell away in hopeless precipices that afforded no hope of negotiating our way along them down to the next continuation of the arête towards the third of the three masses, especially as day was now far spent, and distant storms were brooding more and more ominously every moment along the outraged brows of the Stone Mountains.

But the alps had one more joy for us yet. For here in mounded masses, like lingering living snow-patches amid the emerald turf, we found ourselves bestriding clots and mats of *Androsace mucronifolia*. Quickly in the gathering gloom the camera was called on to immortalise this virginal beauty, growing in such dense snow-drifts that the crowds of wee fluffy-grey rosettes are hidden from view beneath the heads of big snow-white blossoms that are borne all over the cushion on tiny stems of half an inch or less, till the whole becomes a solid sheet of purity, sweetly fragrant of hawthorn—

ANDROSACE MUCRONIFOLIA

though without its model's after-tang of salt shrimps—and of an innocent gaiety, with its innumerable golden eyes to the smiling white flowers that fade to dim rose as each dies, after the fashion of the group. This is another plant of wide distribution, too, and abounds even more lavishly than here in the Da Tung alps, more especially, and beginning at lower elevation, on their limestone outcrops. It is always a high-alpine, indeed, and while *A. longifolia* paradoxically hugs the hottest, driest depths of the hot river-region, *A. mucronifolia* is nowhere seen under about twelve and a half thousand feet, and usually begins even higher. Here, on the outer spurs of the Min S'an, it is to be met with only on the actual grassy summits themselves in the cool fine turf.

But now the Stone Mountains loomed yet grimmer than ever under their brewing storms in the leaden mood of the sunset; it was clearly time to be gone before they began to make their feelings more plain. Once more we scouted for possible means of access to the next swing of the arête by which we could have descended straight upon the ghyll and the gîte down the stone-slope of the main peak, and thence down the straight course of the glen. But sheer precipices on every side blocked our descent, standing out in flanking buttresses also, and with two more huge pyramids of cliff into the bargain cutting us off from the ridge of our desire. So that there was nothing for it but to return along the grassy crest again to the neck between the first and second masses, and thence come down the long scree immediately towards the valley above the waterfall that I had left aside on my right as we mounted. This was a pure joy. The scree was very huge and very steep and very fine; one went down at a plunging run in a series of glissading avalanches, and behind followed

the escort with shouts of glee, enveloped in clouds of shaly dust, with the Go-go floundering down like a Punchinello, and the Mee with weird flappings of hands and feet as he came.

It was a fall of a thousand feet or more. While Purdom was amassing Delphiniums and Corydals for a photograph, I wandered on down the now more solid steep of earth-pan and stone chips, weeding up as I went stalwart plants of the Oread Primula as if they had been any masses of groundsel, so conveniently did they come up, with a big compact tuft of fine rootage, quite different from the fat and sparse spaghetti of the large Nivalids in these parts. It seemed an age before the tiny figures up above had done with their art, as I sat and watched them from a knoll that had begun to be faintly filmed with grass. However, at last they too came plunging downwards in the soft avalanches of the scree, mercilessly breaking the countless horizontal tracks of the wild sheep, visible as so many very faint regular ripples all up the face of the shingle-slopes. So down we trotted, and down and down, under a sky by now so dark and uniformly grey as to threaten a complete change of weather, and make us anxious to avoid being trapped by floods in the gorges. Glen after glen we descended, and then had a steep traverse along above the waterfall, and thence into the depth through a mountain side of alder and willow and Rhododendron, very hot and stuffy, where the retainers kept picking me strawberries. Thus we regained the sedgy glen and ambled happily home, fronted by the enormous towering splendour of the Matterhorn, hardly more magnificent in all its clear splendour from the heights of the ridge than from the undistinguished glades of the foothills. In high contentment, then, ended that famous day, as we subsided

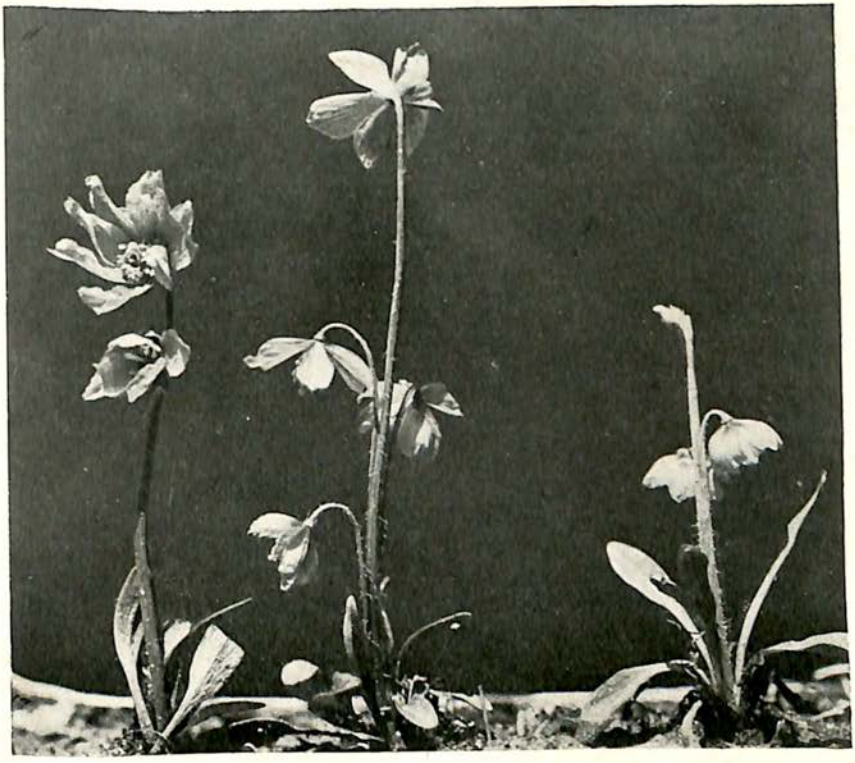
in camp, and the blue smoke of the evening fire went curling up and round the rosy faces of the cliff overhead; and as dusk died dark the stars in all their multitudes sallied out to fight the cloud that covered the heaven, and dissipated it so utterly that the night grew glorious as its predecessor.

CHAPTER XVIII

HOME TO SIKU

No event of any interest marked the later days of the encampment and its ultimate return to Jo-ni. It was strange to come back to the crumbling little town, almost as tropical as Siku by comparison with the cool green highlands we had left, but very different in its open grilling bareness under the bare downs. All over the fells and ramparts and terraces of Jo-ni had been dotted round-headed bushlings of an Aster in the way of *A. acris*,* though much tighter and tidier of habit, which peppered the dry banks in July with blots of hazy lilac in soft contrast to the scarlet turbans of the Slender-Leaved Lily springing up among them, though never in such luxuriance as where some Tibetan had tucked a handful of bulbs into the flat mud of his roof, to be rewarded with dazzling fountains of fireballs. But the Aster gave us our first sign that the harvest was at hand, for now its domes were cloudy with seed-fluffs; and ripe, too, was the wee azure Myosotis that ramps flat on the ground in all the driest, hottest places of these parts. But the slopes and terraces and walls about Jo-ni were in a new richness these days—all a cloud of powdery steel-blue with a small bushy Caryopteris, while purple Salvias and a tall violet Draco-

* *A. Thunbergii.* It does not prove resistant to the chilling damp of a Northern English winter.



THE DAINTY POPPY. MECONOPSIS LEPIDA, SP. NOVA

cephalum gave a deeper colour, and the fluffs of a rich amethyst garlic flopped from the hotter cliffs and banks of loess.

It was indicated, therefore, that now was the time to take a move back upon Siku. But the Jo-ni alps would soon be calling also, and man not having the properties of Sir Boyle Roche's bird, it was evident that one of us must stay in the northern region, while the other should return to the southern. Finally it was decided that Purdom should remain round Jo-ni, working the ranges for seeds as they should ripen, while I myself hurried off to Siku to glean the harvest there, to be rejoined by Purdom when his own labours should allow. The preparations went forward swimmingly, and a new horse added to the staff; and now it was the day before I was to set out. Purdom and I were sitting over our projects quite late that night, when in burst the little missionary, more cockatoo-crested than ever with excitement, waving a telegram that told how France and Germany were at war, though what England might be doing still seemed vague.

It was with these dizzying tidings in my ears, then, that on the twentieth of August I rode sadly out of Jo-ni, glad to be gone, indeed, yet lonely to be leaving Purdom, in the wonder as to when I should see him again. Never was there a country, surely, of changes so abrupt and violent. Hardly two months since, and all that region had been a wild turmoil, in which no man's life was safe outside the walls of a city, and usually not even there: the time of Chago, the time of Satanee, the time of the siege of Siku. Yet now, so wholly had the storms subsided that traffic had already resumed on all the roads, and here was I, a precious foreigner, faring simply forth down the harried track of the Wolf, unpro-

tected in the wildest wilds of China, quite alone, but for the escort of the Mafu, the cook, the Go-go, three soldiers, four donkeymen, two ponies, six wise little asses, and a stray mule commandeered to carry the cook; yet really alone too, seeing that not one of all these had a word of English, nor I myself more than the barest necessaries in Chinese.

Yet in no country of Europe, threaded with railways and pervaded by Lunn's agents, could any journey have gone with more smoothness and pleasantness. So smoothly and pleasantly, indeed, that there is little to tell of it. Day by day we drifted the whole day long on the well-known road, and joy blossomed hourly within me to be getting every minute nearer Siku, which I had quite grown to consider as a home. I felt even almost a vindictive relief in being quit of the stupid great vacant faces of the Jo-ni fells, and the tedious bays of the Tao Hor. Nor did my fancy long delay over the charming little parsley-leaved Clematis delicately climbing here and there in the hedgerows, and swinging out in clouds of tiny bells exactly like those of some *Campanula Bellardii* gone miraculously straw-yellow;* nor even over the special loveliness of these moments in the Jo-ni region, a Gentian whose arms flop along the ground in all the hot dry levels about the town and along the roadsides in the most plebeian places of the flat loess, upturning noble trumpets along their length, of the most intense deep sapphire blue, like velvet—a plant so close to *G. Kurroo* that I suspect it may be no more than a form of that devious species, unless it be a better development of *G. Przewalskyi* (as indeed it proves).

There did indeed befall me sundry moving accidents

* *C. æthusifolia.*

by flood and field, more especially when the field fell away bodily into the flood, and wild-goat scramblings were necessary up one side of a torn loess ravine and down again to the other. These did not, however, befall until we had left the Tibetan districts, where the harvests were now in full swing, and the high corn-racks stooked with shocks of corn, and the wide golden stretches of the river bays full of reapers, and gleaners coming after, and the tracks crowded with birch-wheeled carts conveying harvest home. Through these Arcadian scenes one passed in a perpetual wonder over the immutability of things. Two months ago—and now the unruffled tranquillity of the gathering going on exactly as it has gone since first there were gatherings at all. Where would all the women have been two months since? But now they stood deep in the swathes of corn, on every hand the cynosure of the passers-by. In a thin high wavering wail the muleteers would whine a descant of love in outrageous candour as they wended; the coy Susans, grinning amid the corn, would answer with giggles or invective according as their inclination prompted. As we neared Min-jô the corn had long given place to buckwheat, and now all the shingled plains of the river were one sheet of pink for miles ahead. The love-songs ceased, there being no longer any fair ones to be tickled or annoyed. And all this while the sky was unpropitious, drizzling or grey, and evidently brooding a general break-up of the weather. But the clouds waited until they had got me locked in the gorges of the Nan Hor before they precipitated.

We had the usual difficulty with that broken fell-face of loess above the wide many-channelled stretch of the Nan Hor. Again had all the path fallen away into the river. This time the Mee and I and the pony made an

ascent right up to the summit of the down and along its front, and so down again to rejoin the path. It was so soon after that the caravan reappeared that I felt cheated of all that toil, seeing that the train had waited patiently to get the track repaired. However, these adventures delayed us, and as we entered the southward turn of the Nan Hor, where it begins to convene into the gorges, the day was so far on that not even Mafu's reassurances could convince me there was any chance of reaching Kwan-ting before dark came down. Dusk and weeping rain received us into the jurisdiction of Siku once more, and in the dimness my nerves more than ever disliked those rickety galleries built out along the overhanging walls of the ravine, more especially when immediately beneath you roars so angry and so ugly a water as the Nan Hor.

It was now so soon black dark that all hope of reaching Kwan-ting was clearly vain, and we determined for the first village we should reach. We reckoned without our hosts. The road was full of Mahomedan troops who had been at Siku during our absence, and were now returning northward, leaving a very evil reputation behind. And an evil crew they were, indeed, surly and unaccommodating. We must needs pursue our stumbling way in the night to the next village, and even so with only a dim hope of quarters to cheer us. However, here we did at last discover a huge square house, externally almost Tibetan, but internally offering a wide-roofed hall, hypæthrally lighted in the middle, with abundance of excellent rooms all round, though the kindly little old landlord kept on apologising for its shortcomings. It had been a tiring day. A long trail, ending up with a long stretch of black night in rain on a stony narrow track, where you can't see a yard before

your feet, makes you glad to unfold at last beside a firepan under the comfort of a roof, more especially if the rain all night keep up an incessant ravenous roar outside, as befell to me that time during my sojourn in Tung-Tung, accompanied with dim crashes as of rock-falls or landslips.

When I rose the next morning the deluge still continued. We packed none the less, and meant to get farther, were it only twenty li, so as to arrive in Siku on the morrow. No such luck. About a mile below Tung-Tung begin the narrows of the Nan Hor gorges, and when we reached the crest of the descent we saw that path and everything was obliterated, and that the accumulated fury of the river filled the whole strait with a roaring mass of water. There was nothing for it but to return to Tung-Tung and spend the day. In the afternoon the weather gave us hope by clearing, and I sallied out in the stuffy warmth, down behind the village to the bridge and the little mill, where the path clings along the folds of the cliff, and the Nan Hor sweeps round to join it at an angle, crashing full on the juts of the rocks, and thus deflecting southward. That day it was the wildest and most terrible of scenes. No wonder I had heard crashes and thunderings in the night. The bridge was swept clean away, but for one torn end that projected out over the water from its staggering pier, and quivered incessantly with St. Vitus's dance beneath the assaults of the water. As for the path, stone-falls had crashed down the couloirs of the cliff and smashed it out of existence in every bend. The villagers were already busy repairing it. I stood and watched the picture. It was as awe-inspiring a sight as I have ever seen, so hideous and appalling was that craze of mud-coloured water, tearing straight at the

rocky bluff in breakers and races and house-high billows of mud, like a dirty glacier inspired by devils, roaring at the rock with a sinister undeviating fury as they tore round the bend, often bringing down with them a wrenched-up willow-tree helplessly rolled along, and pathetically waving clear its draggled branches or the dishevelled wreckage of its roots. Dazed and fascinated I stood and watched until my senses began to stagger with the inexhaustible roar and onslaught of the river, and its waves that flew by so violently that the eye was torn from its socket to follow them in their sweep, and soon began to see everything in a streaming flux. And then, on persuasion of a very friendly but unintelligible old person, who plainly feared for my sanity, I climbed up again back into Tung-Tung.

The next day was glorious, and seeing soldiers advancing from the gorges, we realised that these must once more be passable, and duly set out, passing the soldiers on their upward way, and exchanging curt civilities. It was an exciting traverse, for again and again the path was submerged in the flood, and it was strange to be confidently plodding along girth-high in ripples, with the unimaginable rage of the river just a few yards beyond. At the worst places I was pickabacked through the breakers, and at the worst of all this was not possible. For here the full fury of the Nan Hor came surging straight round a bend, and straight at the opposite wall of the ravine, where the path was completely replaced by a ravening sea of waves and whirlpools. After much deliberation it was decided that the path could not be missed if we kept close into the precipice, whatever the water might do. This, accordingly, we all did, bit by bit, the horses almost having to swim to hold their way against the tugging wash, while the men and

pack-beasts formed an alliance of mutual safety, a man on either side of each both hanging on and propping up. Thus, with much excitement, we achieved the passage of the flooded Nan Hor gorges.

After this the long and difficult journey became even more difficult, and therefore seemed longer. For the track had continually fallen away into the river, and necessitated tedious scrambles up and down again, the worst of which was the last on this stretch, where the path resolves itself into a blank succession of raw mud precipices, and we had to wind far up the shoulder of an arid steep, so as to traverse the higher ground, then to descend upon the wavering bridge, now so much more wavering and lop-sided than ever that it was a matter of very devout thankfulness when the whole train was safe across. Threatened lives live long, and while all the solid and respectable bridges of that district lost their lives, even to the great one of Nain Dzai, this shivering valetudinarian still kept its place, and so did its no less ailing cousin across the Blackwater below.

For now we were arrived back at the Blackwater, and turned westwards with rejoicing hearts for Siku, only a short's day stage away. All along the track up the peaceful flats of the valley there were evidences of the river's rage, and when we reached our term at Liang-ja-Ba we learned the fate of the big Nain Dzai Bridge by seeing all the inhabitants coming and going in streams with baskets to glean wreckage and drift-wood along the shore. The evening was radiant, but Liang-ja-Ba lingers unfavourably on my memory. Fearing the dews, I foolishly did not have my bed set up on the flat roof, but inside one of the rooms. And in the night I woke with sensations which soon developed into the painful uncertainty as to whether one shall go on

wondering if one is really being walked on by things that ought not to be walking on one, or whether one shall boldly light a candle and learn the worst. This at last I did, with the result that I hurled all my bedding as far from me as I could, and spent the rest of the night perched on an armchair monkey-fashion, like Great Man Pung preparing for his photograph. However, the joy of coming into reach of Siku again wiped out all thoughts of my bites when in the morning, very leisurely (Mafu being gone ahead to give news of our advent), we packed and proceeded on our final stage, quite uneventfully, but that again and again there were difficult stretches where the track had fallen away, and to cross some unbridged ravine one had to ascend far up the torrid, stony flank of the hill to where the rent was small enough to be traversed without trouble. With all these impediments it was nevertheless still early in the blazing day when I found myself riding up the cobbled streets of Siku, exchanging smiles and greetings on all hands, and welcomed enthusiastically back again into my old quarters by the Great Man himself, as thin and wizen and smiling as ever, despite the vacuities and vicissitudes of his fate.

The heat in the Siku valley was far in excess of anything I had imagined up in the bare bleak north. For here was the little town luxuriating in almost tropical conditions, snuggled among its groves of crimsoning Persimmons, with poplar-girdled terraces and flats all about it, now a shivering sheet of metallic glory from the ripening grain or millet, in every shade from richest gold to bronze. Qualms accordingly seized me as to the conditions on the heights, and I determined to make my first expedition on the next day, anxious to lose no time, especially as I did not know how soon Purdom

LOOKING OUT OVER THE STONE MOUNTAINS

might be following on my track. So the next day, accordingly, the Mafu and the Mee and I, with the two little donkeys, set off toiling in the glare up the loess downs, to pass the night by invitation in the Pink Temple. Arid as ever were the downs, and some of their seeds not ripe and others fallen. Tiny wiry Asters, delicate as *Felicia abyssinica*, occupied the loess banks, the citron Allamandas of the Incarvillea still shone, and there were two new beauties to sweeten the way in a prostrate little purple legumine, for all the world like an intense, rich violet form of *Cytisus purpureus*, refined and more profuse in flower, flopping perfectly flat along the ground in long sparse trailers. The other is even more lovely.

It is the lesser Leptoderm, whose filmy fine clouds of wiry sprays beset with foliage wee as the wee-est myrtle's, had been a problem all through the early days of descending the Blackwater gorges to Wen Hsien, and a problem now solved by the long, delicate sheaves of pinky lilac stars with which each spray concludes, bending and wavering beneath their burden with inimitable grace, and in charm far surpassing the stiffer and larger-flowered Leptoderm which inhabits the Nan Hor Valley about Tung-Tung and Kwan-ting. This latter, indeed, does not descend to the blazing depths of the Blackwater, while *L. virgata* does not ascend far out of it, and is not to be found in the realm of the other, the last specimens I remember being some peculiarly lovely and luxuriant bushes that float out in a volley of pink haze from the hot cliffs above the river some three miles south of Kwan-ting, where the grey flannel Buddleia makes also its last apparition. It is not on the broiling downs of Siku, however, that you may hope to see the fairy Leptoderm in such beauty as on the broiling rocks lower down, where no evil thing can annoy

it. For all over the Siku loess hills go browzing herds of hardy goats, questing the almost invisible growths that cover without even veiling the nudity of that barren fell. The Leptodermis and a certain Daphnoid thing, with thyrses of golden yellow trumpet-stars on what seem like shoots of a very green willow, are the only shrubby plants of the open hillside, and while the golden plumes are protected from attack by the family venomousness, the Leptoderm is so eaten down into unsightly dumps that only here and there, on some specially sheer and arid gravelly steep, does some long heathery branch break up untouched in its feathery fine grace, and in August's end arch over with its plume of pinky lilac more delicately lovely than any lilac known to man.

It was afternoon before we reached the pinnacle of the Pink Temple and ensconced ourselves in that charming place. The attendant priest even invited me to pitch my bed in front of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and was only induced to relegate me to the side-chamber set apart for guests by the protests of my servants, who feared that my nerves and brain might not prove strong enough to bear such manifestations as those holy presences would certainly provide through the dark watches about midnight. Myself, I think I could have borne them. They could have been only beautiful, for never in my life have I found a place so wholly filled with a sense of peace and holiness as that wee shrine, so high over the dusty world of the Blackwater. Our Lady of Mercy smiles out from rockworks surrounded by doves and angels and departing discomfited fiendlets. On her right sits a little image of the Wholly Perfect One draped in a cope of scarlet silk. In front is the tiny courtyard, where no cat could swing, with lesser

shrines on either side, one of which contains sad derelict deities collapsing amid dust, and the other a brace of cupboarded dolls in superimposed cloaks of silk, behind whom stand big statues on guard, and in front iron porringers full of incense silt, which are rung at evening, and give a sound as sweet and lingering as any bell. The court is closed by the block of Lilliputian rooms where the priest has his home, close to the great bell on its platform, while back to back to the main shrine of Our Lady is another, facing down towards the gate, where a benevolent old person sits throned on a reclaimed tiger cat; and in between are yet other minute houses of holiness, with the pine-trees murmurous all about them, and then the sheer fall of the cliff away on either side, and that wonderful feeling of being poised on space.

It is certainly a very kindly and holy place, that little Pink Miao on the pinnacle, and the summer evening comes very sweet into its courts. As dusk descends, the priest begins his rounds. He is a dark shaggy creature, model for any of the saints and martyrs you may see frescoed on the wall of Our Lady's shrine depicting her miracles. With arm outstretched from heaven she plucks them out of the fire, or, uprising from the water, she lifts them from drowning, in a series as naïf and passionate as any you may see in France or Italy, commemorating the interventions of that younger Madonna who rules over the heart of Christianity. And round he goes in the balmy twilight at his service. In the first blue moment of dusk the sticks of incense shine like stars before Our Lady and before the swathed figure of the Perfect One; the brocaded dolls in the cupboard of the wee lateral chapel get theirs also, and their bowls, sweetly smitten, give out a long ringing

quivering tone that floats far in its vibrations through the twilight before the next stroke is rung.

And then the Angelus begins, and the great bell booms out its message of peace over the world down beneath the feet of this holy place. Deep and velvety and comforting as peace the vast and violet tone hangs reverberating in the air after each blow, and seems to ripple through the infinity of the air in a rhythmic procession of force. Far out above the darkened valley it haunts and floats, and the city hears its message of calm outstretching like a gesture of blessing over the troubled earth. And so the night draws her cloak across the unfolded world beneath, and sapphire darkness fills the courts of the Pink Temple. Still the incense ascends through the stillness in spires of unwavering sweetness, and the deep soft memories of the bell throb through the silence.

The flats behind the pinnacle were golden now with corn as I set out the next morning for the climb, and the hedgerows all a wild tangle of magnified ragged robin and swathes of pale harebells, amid which shone, furious and splendid, the fireballs of the Tiger Lily—here met with for the first and only time of my travels, and adding a glory of orange and black to the lush riot of blue and rose. But soon, as I began to mount the slope, after an emotional time of scrambling along the ledges of the limestone cliff after the as yet unripe capsules of the pearlbush, I began to realise the charms and vicissitudes of a plant-collector's life. The lesson was to be written in blood upon my soul. Packets of seed look dear in lists at a shilling each; I know now that they would be cheap at sixty, so much will they assuredly have cost their collector in anxiety and trouble and nerve-strain before he has acquired them.

For seed-gathering is simply the most harrowing form of gambling as yet invented by humanity. All the gods are against you, all men, all beasts, all elements combined, with the changes and chances of posts to complicate matters, and wars and rumours of wars; to say nothing of what the raiser at home may make of your results, and how the slugs will then deal with them, and how they will elect to prosper even if so undealt with. At the end of ten days' arduous trail along impossible tracks at a foot's pace from dawn to dark you arrive beneath your fifteen-thousand-foot mountain on the guess that its seeds may be ready. You ascend its flanks with palpitating heart, and camp among the rocks, and make your lair amid beasts in the light of the moon, only to find that the sole objects of all this toil have either never made any seed, or else that it is not ripe, or else that it is ripe and fallen, or else that peasants have cut it down for hay, or yaks trampled it, or wild animals devoured it, or a hailstorm dashed it all from the pod only half an hour before you arrived upon the scene. There are incalculable chances against you, in fact, of sun or cold or rain or snow: to such an extent that, if you are after several species on one range, you cannot possibly contrive to catch the climacteric moment of all simultaneously, and have to trust that, by hitting the bull's eye of one species, you may lay salt on the tail-end of another and the advance guard of a third. In fine, such are the grim and glorious uncertainties of seed-collecting that, to financiers bored with the staleness of the Stock Exchange, to lovers and gamblers sickened with the monotony of their respective sports, I recommend a season of seed-collecting in Tibet as a sure stimulant to their jaded capacities for excitement.

In the Alps of that hot and southerly region, in fact, I had quite underrated the rapidity and fierceness of the summer. Never should I have gone north to Jo-ni; I ought rather to have sat on in Siku, agape for the ripening of each seed, as a gourmet waits for his suspended pheasant to fall away from its tail-feathers. The European Alps give no notion, in their sluggish seasons, of how quickly things come and go in the ranges of western Asia. I remember being one year in the Karawanken by the middle of September, and finding *Dianthus alpinus* still in all the glory of its bloom, while *Primula Wulfeniana* was not yet more than crimsoning in the capsule, and *Campanula Zoysii* hardly even yet beginning to think about opening its little pale blue Perrier bottles. I was left marvelling when and how these leisurely beauties, then, succeeded in perpetrating their seed at all. Very different are the violent conditions of the Tibetan ranges: the long hard winter, the abrupt awakening, the swift ardent summer, and the rapid return of winter—later, indeed, than on the alps of Europe, but more final and decisive when it comes.

The Thundercrown Ridge especially, isolated and hot, projecting into China over the torrid valley of the Blackwater, is particularly quick in ripening the seeds of its children. I found the Incarvillea all gone, the Stellera all gone, the ground Daphne seedless from the start, the butterfly Iris fled from view in the intricacies of the scrub, and the silver Saxifrage and the Narcissus Anemone as naked as winter boughs. My last hope was the Grand-Violet, to whose ridge I ultimately attained through the lavish tangle of big purple Asters and ragworts that had sprung up into a very jungle in the couloirs and slopes, almost hiding from view even the stout tall columns and enormous velvety pods of the

Lampshade Poppy. Down upon the precipitous face I adventured, with my heart in my mouth for anxiety about the seed, while above me on the crest the Mee went capering up and down like a cat on a griddle, exclaiming at intervals, "Exceedingly bad going; very exceedingly bad going"—a remark which, as the rock-face was like the side of a rotten house, and indefinite in depth, I could not consider unjustified. It might have been yet higher and steeper, however, for all I cared, had it but yielded the Primula. At last, indeed, I came on here and there a plant after long search, but of seed there was no sign; and it was in deep despondency at last that I drooped homewards to the Pink Temple, bruised and sore with a series of disappointments that only the holy comfort of that place could soothe, as twilight at last diffused the balm of Our Lady over my spirits, and made me feel that perhaps other hopes might prove more fruitful elsewhere.

I took a day of rest after this, sitting in Siku, too hot in my sole silk robe among the flies, with a most noble storm to watch, advancing from Thundercrown amid incessant thunder and royal flashes, and solid curtains of rain that blurred and extinguished the peaks up behind the Pink Temple till they were like phantasms in a Chinese picture. And on the morrow I attempted the first of the gorges, with a failure as complete as before to find anything still lingering in seed. All the Primulas and all the poppies were fled, and yet further to deride my woes, the inevitable daily storm duly gathered and broke in so furious a deluge that in five minutes we were soaked to the skin and half deafened by the crashes of the thunder reverberating in the walls and convolutions of the gorge. Having done which, the mountains grew perfectly serene again, and escorted me back to

Siku in an afternoon so radiant as to seem positively ironical, were it not that I acquired a new joy by the way in a close cousin of Bœa's, justly called the Mountain-pretty.

Oreochăris Henryana had, indeed, already occurred to me, disdainfully flaunting from unattainable cliffs above Tung-Tung, and again in the banks coming down; but here for the first time, at the emergence of the gorges on to the delta above Siku, I came on big drifts of it, hugging those cool shady cliffs and rocks and slopes among boulders, where the soil is clogged and caky and dank and filmed with a scabby grey moss, in preferring which situations invariably the Mountain-pretty differs from the arid sunny tastes of Bœa, and gives better hope of being able to bear our climate. May it be so. Never was there a prettier thing, indeed, with rosettes of hairy dim green foliage, not at all silvery, but very like that of *Ramondia pyrenaica;* very like Ramondia, too, in the way it sends up its little stems, each of them unfurling a flight of two or three small thimbles of blossom in a subtly charming shade of bronzy rose, with suffusions of cream and pink.

On the morrow, still impatient to be done with minor tasks before Purdom arrived, I set out betimes for the Great Gorge, yet not early enough to elude the jealous eye of the mountain spirits. It was a bigger expedition, anyway, involving encampment as high up as possible. I had fixed in my mind to lair beneath a big boulder in the coppice just below the final ascent to the ridge above that stiff pull over the grassy shoulder opposite the ghyll of the citron Primula. So that we went in procession, with two of the little asses bearing the bedding and the cooking things as far as the track would allow, to the base of the long ascent of coppice, from

which you have that tiresome dip again on the other side into a new valley of the woodland. And now again the mountains made their mood felt in a hailstorm, short, indeed, but of so passionate a violence that the bombardment hurt bitterly, and all the ground was white. However, it passed over into glorious weather again; I did not yet appreciate the malign cleverness of the gods, and set forward rejoicing in this apparent reprieve from their wrath. Too soon did we all realise the truth, for now the bushes and brakes of bamboo were so burdened with the storm as to be no more than an incessant douche of icy water. Far worse than any rain was it to battle one's way through those glacial dripping tangles that flogged us with streams of ice at every step, while, far behind, the luckless bedding could be seen, heaving convulsively through the coppice like the backs of a brace of white elephants.

Into the side valley we descended, and racing ahead for warmth (having no longer a dry stitch anywhere about me, and the cloudless afternoon beginning now to draw towards a chill dusk), I came at last to the red cliff below the Citrina gully, and struck away up the dense bamboo-slope opposite, scorning the lure of the hunter's gîte under those inviting underhung walls, and believing that my going on to the higher point would inevitably induce the staff to follow me on. Very far behind I heard their intermittent howlings down the chine as they tried to cheer their chilly way through that mass of tangled wetness, now sinking into darkness as the sun slanted more and more over the huge combes. Worse than ever was that toil up through the wall of bamboos, the soppingness of which, the cold embraces, no tongue can decently record, while the earth of that fell-wall was now so like greased ice

that one must needs haul oneself up among the bamboo canes, slithering and floundering at every step. However, at length I did win through to the steep shoulder of grass above, and heard the faint cries of the staff now reverberating under the rosy walls of the gully far down below. It was twilight by this time, green and clear and chill. Onwards I raced, having first summoned my followers from the depths with howls of a pungency surpassing their own, which elicited answers. By these I was greatly reassured, wrestled my way along through the burdened dripping jungle round the base of the cliff-buttress, and came out at last into the coppiced glade beyond which I knew was near my rock. Warm with effort and triumph and the hope of a comfortable settlement, I duly came to the place; and a forbidding-looking cavern I suddenly considered it, as I gazed on its dank recesses with a grue in the cold gloom of sundown in that gloomy wood of sparse Junipers.

However, secure that my followers would ere long follow with all the apparatus of comfort, I surveyed the scene with satisfaction, until it was forced on me that I was exceedingly wet, to the point of not being able to be any wetter, and that I was rapidly becoming cold, to the point of not being able to get any colder. I stamped and thumped with all the gesticulations favoured by those who wish to banish chills, with no avail. I remembered the matches with which, in a fit of prudence rare in a non-smoker, I had taken pains to arm myself, with a view to lighting a fire; but when I lugged them from my soaked pocket I found them a mere mush of wetness, as empty of divine fire as any drama of [redacted] (deleted by the censor). Amid the rapidly falling night I stood and shivered in my clammy clinging Nessus shirt of ice, awaiting the retainers, and determined to

brave it out until they came, as come they assuredly would, knowing I had gone ahead. But at last I could bear the swathed cold compress no longer, and with difficulty peeled off the silk shirt and stood in my breeches. Minutes passed and lengthened out. I ransacked my armoury of Chinese swear-words suitable to the occasion, when at last the defaulters should appear; and then gradually came to realise that not only was I now a great deal colder than ever, but without any rag of refuge to put on.

To get into that soaked snake of a shirt again was an impossibility. My handkerchief was as mere a wisp of wetness, and yet more inadequate as a shelter from the icy mountain night that had by this time almost swallowed me in its maw. I rent the wide air with ululations; nothing answered me but the gigantic silence of the hills. There was no sound of human approach, no sound at all in the ominous woodland. And pride at last gave out before the thought of how foolish to stand there diligently collecting pneumonia with a view to upholding dignity in the eyes of servants who clearly did not mean to come within reach of the spectacle. So off I set, and down I trotted through the jungles again, gradually recovering the warmth of life; and as I did so, deploring inwardly my inability to rage in cold blood—if rage indeed I should, seeing that I soon saw I had set the men an impossible task. For when at length I emerged from the bamboos, and found the advance guard ensconced in that very pleasant little hunter's gîte beneath the overhanging precipice, I found that even then the bedding had not arrived, and it was an hour at least before it succeeded in breasting the billows of the shrubbery as far as the ghyll. By that time it was black night. How, then, could

they ever have achieved that last and worst pull of all up through the wall of bamboos, and along into the upper glade? As for me, when I dived down upon them out of the soaked bushes, dishevelled, crazy-haired, and naked to my soaked breeches, I must have looked "almost wild" ("she did indeed, Louisa"). However, Mafu lent me his parsonic-looking black overcoat, a relic of Purdom, and his black satin trousers; and into these I happily subsided, very soon arriving at a condition of absolute beatitude, to be in harbour after the tempests of the day, now dead in a noble evening, serene and cloudless and august.

The next day was to match—one of those days which the Psalmist has described, with quiet irony, as better than ten thousand. I slept but ill under the face of the full moon, whose beauty is no friend to sleep, and breeds strange thoughts as one lies engulfed in her ghastly glare; and when I woke the sun was just gilding the tips of the wooded crags and buttresses across the glen, high over the shoulder of bamboo-brake. In the perfect and flawless chill of that early September morning we were off betimes up through the jungle, and up the grass hump, and round the precipice into the gully of the final ascent. As we went the three poppies fell to our bag, and *Primula Woodwardii;* but all my thoughts were up on that high little neck where the Grand-Violet, abundant there as nowhere else, offered me the last hope of getting seed. Even where I had found capsules in the gorges they had all been sere and empty, and on this one spot depended my one remaining chance.

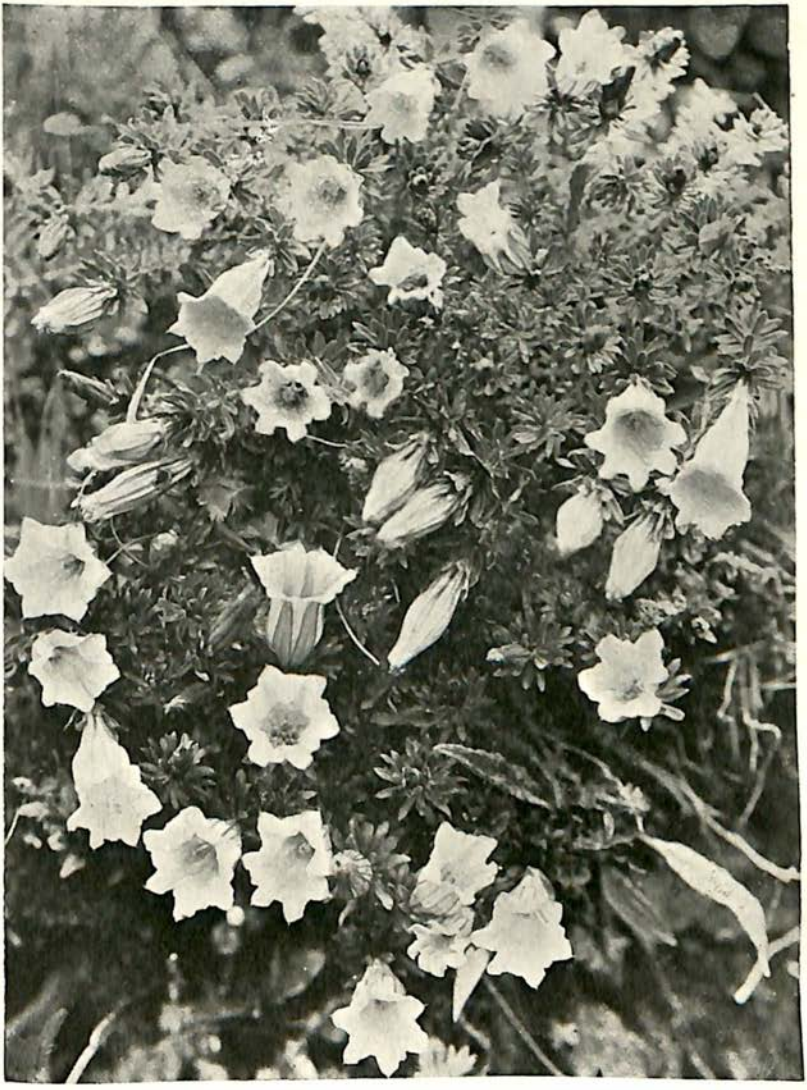
As I drew near my anxiety and the beating of my heart grew almost painful. Despair seized me when I remembered previous failures, the open situation, the devastating hailstorms of these later days. Panting

I at last scrambled up beneath the cliff, and ascended to the neck where, among the moss and tiny Rhododendrons, the Primula had dappled that whole saddle with sparks of blue fire. And now, of those hundreds of flowers, there survived only some three or four capsules, standing grim and lonely on their elongated stalks above the minute scrub. And every one of them was white and empty as an ancient skull. I cursed the plant's exaggerated and giraffe-like throat, that prevents more than about one per cent. of the blossoms from setting seed. Then in my gloom I turned to climb down again, wanly remembering a certain long ledge of rock on the cliff-face below where there had been some fine specimens. Was it worth while to have a look, on chance of seed remaining? Capsules, indeed, I soon saw from afar, four or five of them standing sturdily up in a line under the boulder. Empty, of course. I hardly cared or dared go nearer. At a second glance, however, I stood stricken, stock-still, and almost afraid to breathe; for there in the cup of each, discapsuled, loose, and at the mercy of a moment's flaw of wind, there still lay seed. Pavid and incredulous I crept nearer with the utmost caution, moving with Agag-like delicacy for fear I might shake the mountain, and spreading myself out as wide as possible to intercept the breeze. I reached the pods, and with agonised firm precision I nipped them off between finger and thumb, in anguish lest a single grain should drop; and so, with sweat upon my brow, and a great sigh heaved, I pocketed up the Grand-Violet in a special pouch, and relapsed into the ecstasy of achievement.

The rest of the day was a carpet-dance combined with a climb. For August amply compensates these heights for the passing of June, and the flowers of early Septem-

ber make a shivering carpet of gold and pale blue over the fells. The turf is full of Edelweiss's silver stars amid the ruffling galaxies of golden Saxifrage, dotted with the bluebell garlic's fluffs, and often turned to a mere sweep of light azure by the blue-water Gentian.* This I had seen in its first beginnings on the alps of Ardjeri, but in September it transfigures all the highland lawns of the Min S'an to a surf of shimmering pale blue with its innumerable tumbled cushions of sprays, each one of which is set with whorls of fine foliage, filmy and lacy of effect as a lady's bedstraw, and ends in a single upturned trumpet of a soft clear water-blue within, but without of a paler tone freaked with dark firm lines that exquisitely emphasise its grace of outline. In its abundance and beauty of blossom it produces effects of colour unparalleled in the race. Nowhere have I seen such mountain sides of undiluted sky as it produces, and were it not for the more vivid and violent glory of my own Gentian in the Da Tung—by far the most dazzlingly beautiful I have ever seen, relegating *G. verna*, *G. excisa*, and *G. bavarica* to mere dowdiness—*G. hexaphylla* would have my vote for the most lavishly lovely of its race, not competing with the shrill and incandescent azure of *G. Farreri's* great trumpets, visible a quarter of a mile away in the grass, like stars of burning sky, or the green lights fallen from a rocket, but making up in the massed profusion of its flowers, and in their soft tenderness of melting tones striking out quite a distinct line in the family. A distinct line is followed in the seed, too, but this is of a fashion much favoured among the border Gentians of Tibet, and very disconcerting to the collector until he has learned their little ways. For when the blossom goes over, the style protrudes farther

* *G. hexaphylla*, F. 217.



GENTIANA HEXAPHYLLA

and farther out of its mouth till about twice the length of the cup; and while the collector is vainly hunting for seed at the base of this, where the ovary should surely be, and grows weary with disappointment at never finding any, lo! suddenly a little oval knob at the very tip of the style gapes open with two lips, and there is the seed after all, and if you are not wary it is out and away while you watch.

In the clear radiant air I mounted to the Roterdspitze, gathering my harvest, while the staff was scattered on the hillside, each man after some appointed treasure. My own task was the Dainty Poppy, and no words can paint my rapture when, though almost every pod was empty, I at last came on one with seed still lingering. Moreover, I gathered a pinch of the silver Saxifrage, and some ripening carpels of the Narcissus Anemone, which seems to have a tiresome habit of falling away still green, so that you have to catch it on the jump and take no chances. So well I might rejoice in the faultless loveliness of the day; even the clouds were an addition, little fluffy rolls of gold that they were, far up along the sky. To my right, as I stood on the crest and looked westward, Thundercrown rose more magnificent than ever along the arête in folds of light and dark at the head of the huge ridge and far higher. One saw the whole world laid out in a map. Not a vestige of snow was left on the Satanee Alps, except in some dark couloir; and, with the exception of the Castleberg fortresses opposite Satanee, they now looked much duller and dowdier of outline than the wild chevaux-de-frise of the Min S'an. In the rocks, too, of the arête there was a new flower. This is a splendid Gentian, forming squat cushions of pale shining foliage like that of *Silene Elizabethæ* in the crevices, close upon which emerge enormous

handsomely designed, open trumpets with wide-flanged mouths, in tones of soft periwinkle purple, suggesting, but not rivalling, its European cousins of the Acaulis group. How and when this finds opportunity for seeding, opening so late in the season as it does, is a mystery only paralleled by that of *G. Farreri*, which only begins to open in early September on the alpine heights of the Da Tung, within but a few weeks of final winter.* On the Roterdspitze itself the little Potentilla had quite passed out of flower, and not yet ripened seed. Its deep emerald foliage, hard and crisped and shining in its tight hassocky domes, more than ever recalled some dwarf, compact, and hairless Saxifrage in the group of *S. Schraderi;* and when the whole becomes a gilded hillock, with innumerable flowers almost as large as those of *P. verna's*, and with the same orange blotch at the base of each petal, then, indeed, you feel that here in *P. biflora* is a golden counterpart in alpine charm to snowy *P. Clusiana* and the pink dog-roselets of *P. nitida*, though so much tighter and more compact in habit than either, and of an uncompromising, lucent baldness of rich green.

Long I lay about on the uncomfortable red shales of the Roterdspitze, rejoicing formlessly in the glory of life, and now and then going over to look down on the northern slope of the ridge, where in the grass, amid the oceans of golden Saxifrage and Edelweiss and Aster, clumps of the bluebell garlic shone finer and freer than elsewhere, enhanced by a queer annual Gentian whose frail sprays flop along the ground, turning up at intervals

* *G. Farreri* was collected in 1914, unbeknownst, by Tibetan lads of mine in the Jo-ni Alps. It was brought as *G. hexaphylla*, but I saw differences in the pod; so it may be hoped for under F. 217*a* and E. 332, though I'd no notion what it was to prove.

a long, narrow tube, opening out flat at the top into a wide pointed star of pale straw yellow, luminous among the stronger colours of that carpet. At last, however, the sun went westering, and I foresaw the end of that delectable and memorable day—one of those pearls on the rosary of life that occur so unexpectedly, and too often without having their true Orient lustre recognised until left behind on the chain. Downwards in an elegant leisure of repletion I sauntered into the gloaming of the depths delicately, the string sandals half cutting off my toes, and making me regret that for once, for the joy of free feet, I had renounced the huge iron-shod boots which did me such yeoman service for two years; and sat long on the big grass hummock above the final gulf of the bamboo-brake, where night already reigned impenetrable, and all the wooded folds and deep gorges below were wrapped in her gloom, but overhead on the high scarred cliffs and ridges the day was dying in floods of scarlet light, "*echt dolomitisch*" as any post-card you might once have bought in Bozen. When I plunged down into the darkness it was evidently too late to diverge into the ghyll of the citron Primrose, and I descended straight upon the gîte, where soon the dim smoke was curling up the face of the cliff, while I sat out on the wall and looked southward over the gorge to where in the V-shaped fold of the woods, very far away, the Felsenhorn and the Satanee Alps lay softly and mistily amethyst over blurred intervening ranges of blue against the clear pale azure green of the evening sky.

The next day I descended again to Siku, where the harvest of seeds was daily cooking out in the yard in trays of paper weighted with stones. Purdom, however, did not arrive, and as the time was passing, I decided not, after all, to defer any longer that expedi-

tion onto Thundercrown which I had hoped we might enjoy in common. Domestic disturbances hastened my decision, for one night, as I slept, the cook burst in with a passionate and unintelligible tale in which the Mafu, beating, a woman, were bafflingly commingled. Summoning all my majesty, I cast my silken gown about me and sallied forth to the scene of conflict. In a dim corner of the yard a group of figures wrestled about a prostrate object, which proved to be the lady in question, vociferating loudly. Mafu now also supervened, in a state of intense agitation and loquacity, with tears in his eyes. My judicial demeanour concealed, I hope, my acute powerlessness to make head or tail of what was happening, everybody screaming simultaneously, and my own Chinese extending far enough to put a question and not to understand the resulting torrent of reply. However, at last the presumably peccant person, having bowed her forehead to the floor in front of me, was led away to the Yamun, introduced by my card, and I retired to my room, there to cross-examine the cook, who, however, proceeded so passionately to enlarge on his grievances against the Mafu that I could but assume a colder air than ever, and wait the other's tale, which, when he had returned from the Yamun with Great Lord Jang's card duly exchanged for mine, proved him no less volcanic and unintelligible than the other, and evidently anxious to find out what the cook had told me and how much I had made of it. It was clearly time to make a diversion. I gave orders for Thundercrown on the morrow.

In a stifling broody grey day we ascended to spend the night at Barley Bee, and on the morrow made a far ascent on the flank of the mountain, high above Big Stone, to the point where a boulder vast as a church

impended over a shallow recess at its base, offering no cave, indeed, but an angle of shelter beneath its sheer, overhanging wall, open to the whole prospect down the Blackwater country and to all the breezes that might visit us out of China. That first day, camp having been set here, I ascended to the upland lawns to get done with the harvest of their various treasures, and to have one more search for lingering seed of the Dainty Poppy. With a scanty but adequate pinch of this I returned to the boulder slowly in the brooding afternoon. Violent storms were sweeping along the Satanee Alps, and a grey stuffiness overclouded the air on Thundercrown and boded ill for our bigger expedition of the morrow. However, I had hardly dined and sorted the seeds than the weather broke in a most lovely thunderstorm, with hail and an intensely cold wind, and all the enormous depths and distances of the Blackwater Valley veiled in the white wreaths of the rain. The sky was wholly dark, but a strip of clearness out in the east was of a smoky opal blue through the films of the falling hail in the foreground, while a huge rainbow towered high over all, and shafts of sun from the west lit up the opposite crags against the gloom. And at last the tempest passed over into a glorious, bronzy, Turneresque effect of tangled surging greynesses, shot with lightning above the fading panorama of the Blackwater depths, and night descended clear and calm and very cold, with the flooding moonlight seeming to set the earth below at a yet more unguessable remoteness beneath our feet.

The next day was cloudless, and we spent it very happily doing our duty round the amphitheatre beneath the curtain-precipice of Thundercrown. In the screes I now saw that abundance of the violet Delphinium

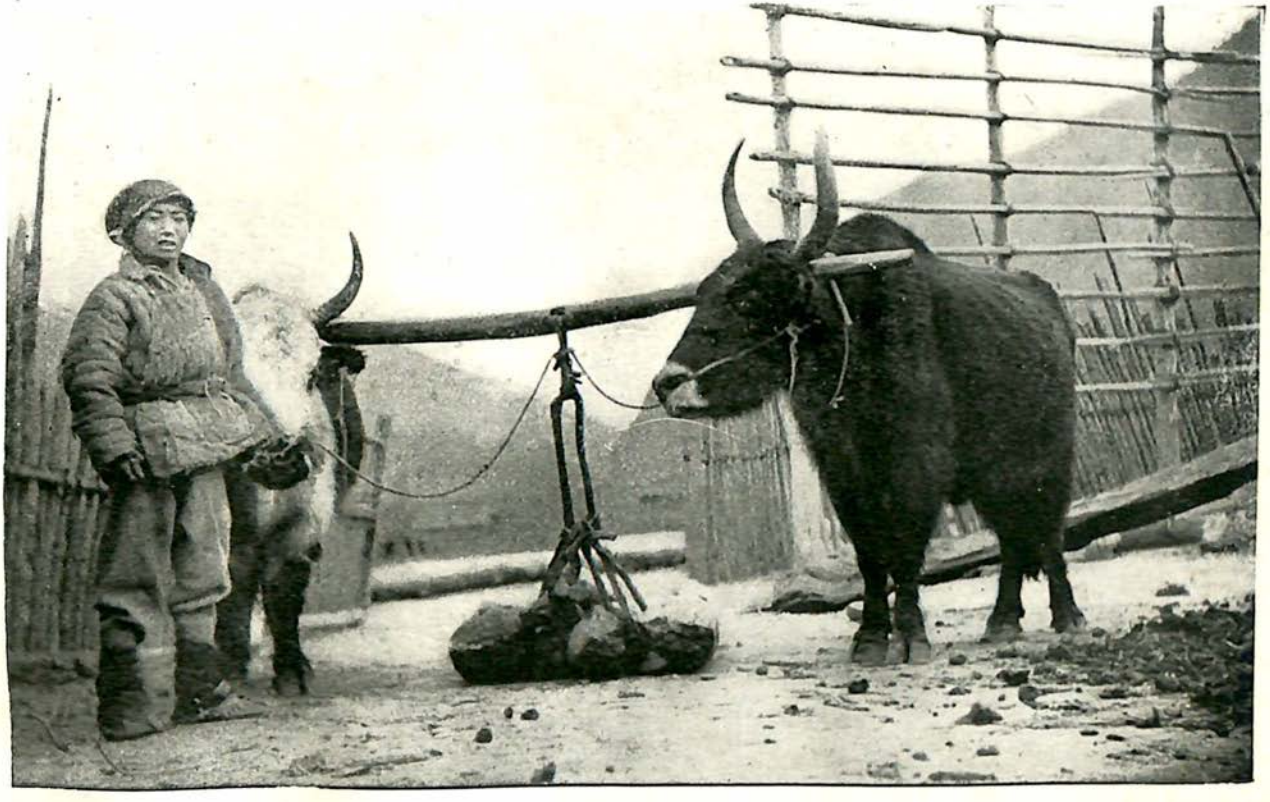
and the azure and white Corydal might well have spared us all the toil of visiting the Jo-ni Alps, had we wanted to be spared; but the Geranium was here replaced by a most lovely little clumped garlic in the highest earth-pans, with heads of pale china-blue, like a Pus'hkinia's in effect, but richer and clearer. The harvest went well, but for the rue-buttercup, which gave much more trouble than it is worth, if it is going to prove only the petalless poor squin of the Da Tung Alps, instead of my similarly foliaged beauty of the Satanee range, with blossoms like those of a sainted Bland Anemone. For never was a plant more coy and elusive. It sheds its little nuts green, and off they fall and slither down, and lodge immediately in chinks of the scree. Round each tuft you have to pry and peer to find a weighted head lying prone on the ground with nuts still attached, but falling off at a breath and rolling in every direction. And now begins the fun, for unless you pouch your prey at the first pounce it sinks away into the shingle, and the more you scrabble and poke for it the more rapidly does it dive, like any mole, and more shingle slides in on it from above, and soon the quarry is lost in the heart of the stone-slope. Prone in a driving snow-storm I burrowed and fiddled, craving vainly for a salt-spoon. At long last, when the packet was fat, a flaw of wind caught its corner, and away it went dancing down the shingles, and all the seeds came flolloping out, and had each to be individually retrieved with as much pains as in the first gathering. After this, still fluttered over by the snowstorm, I felt my day's work achieved, and through the gathering rain and greyness of the lower downs descended to the gîte again, apprehensive of the worst in the way of weather, for by now awful veils of wet and snow were sweeping over the

crags of Thundercrown above. However, it all went over, abortive, to Satanee very grandly under the arch of a rainbow, and the night succeeded serene as the last, and fiercely cold. The men lit a huge bonfire outside the gîte to give warmth and keep off wolves, and high above the crackling swirls of smoke and fire the great round moon went drifting.

But when I rose the sun shone whitely, and I did not trust it. The first work being done, we now struck camp and descended into Siku again. This time I did not, as usual, come down the left side of the valley below Barley Bee, but tried the right, which leads under degringolating cliffs of shale and grit and coaly-looking stuff before attaining the long flank of the down. Here the way was diversified, as we crossed one of the frozen-looking mud avalanches of this region afoot—the path having broken away in a sheer cliff, so that the horse had to be sent round the other way—by sudden carronades of stone-falls from the rotten cliff overhead, which made us take to our heels across that open space, raked by the fire of the precipice in slab after slab of shale that came down spinning and dancing and rolling and bounding and skimming with the most baffling diversity of direction. When at last we reached Siku it was to see my usual weather luck once more justified, for up above the mountain still stood clear of cloud, but clothed in a pale garment of rain, while all the sky was leaden and grey upon the world like a lid. And well it might be, for the morrow of the eighth of September brought me my first news of what Europe had been about of late, to prove her civilisation and justify her diplomacies. Still whirling like a leaf in the gale with the catastrophic tale, I was brought to contemplation of more immediate realities by an accompanying

note from Purdom, announcing that he could not arrive for yet many days, and that in the meantime, in the dislocation of the world, China also bade fair to run amuck once more.

Peking itself, it seemed, sat trembling in fear of rape and rapine at the hand of unpaid troops in the deficiency of European bullion, and the Mahomedans were all agog up the border to play their long-planned game, and the Wolves were once more busy in the south and threatening to return to Kansu, so that Min-jô and Jo-ni were again packing up in panic. In fact, what with all these complications, and the Elder Brothers anxious to add to the hell-brew, it seemed as if all our plans and prospects were in fresh peril, and nothing could save one from depression but the reflection that there is always quite time to combat a difficulty when it actually arises, without going half-way out to meet what may very likely prove only a phantom. But pandemonium seemed to be filling the world that day, as I sat out in the cloudless heat shelling my seeds, with only the murmur of the Blackwater to be heard in the distance. Even the perfection of the weather only added point to the universal horror. Thundercrown stood perfectly naked of clouds under the sun from morning to evening—the rarest of miracles. Well may all the Tibetan March be now looking confidently for the manifestation of a new Nirmankaya Buddha (though Maitreya the comforter is not due yet for more than two thousand years), as the Jews for Messiah, and the crazier missionaries of the March for a Second Advent. The world's need has created the demand. Let us hope demand may soon engender supply, for never were the services of these holy persons more urgently required by a world led into perdition by a thousand years of "progress."



A Tibetan Yak-boy grinding on the house-top

However, the next day cheerfulness came creeping in once more to my philosophies, and I concluded that it was no good weeping over other people's spilt milk, and even less profitable to do so over one's own before it *was* spilt. I ordered preparations for going up into the Great Gorge again on the morrow, to camp once more at the gîte, and accomplish the Citrina gully. Meanwhile I went out and up on to the wall in my string sandals and silken gown, with the Mee in attendance, to do my duty by the seed of the yellow Incarvillea on the steeps below the conning-tower, where there was also the fun of picking out the most brightly coloured or finest flowered forms of the little wiry Aster,* and gathering their fluffs here and there. There was a big grasshopper here with folded wings exactly resembling folded leaves of green corn, and in the trees there sat another strange thing of the cicada kind that said "Whi-*ee*, whi-*ee*," in a continuous loud metallic snarl with a final rasp like some furious tin cat, but much louder.

On the morrow the expedition set off up the Great Gorge again, a road now growing familiar, and on the way found the Cotoneaster, now more beautiful than ever, covering all the silted white floors of the glen with a glistering carpet of its green foliage, as if it had been any mass of prostrate glittering willow over whose expanse somebody should have shaken down the burden of a dozen holly-trees, so did the scarlet berries twinkle and glint and flash amid the pale gold of the dying leaves and the lucent emerald of the living ones. The upper reaches of the glen, too, were plumy now with the towering foam-spires of the Rodgersia in seed, handsomer than ever in these dank corners under the sunless precipice, and of almost tropical development

* *A. hispidus*, of no certain temper in damp lush England.

in its huge horse-chestnut foliage. So we came anew to the gîte beneath the precipice, and encamped; and slept; and woke to a day of such steady downpour that it seemed as if we were in for real unpleasantness.

Long did I lie and from my bed contemplate the wall of woodland opposite, ghostly through the greyness of the rain, until at last cold clouds blanketed out the whole scene in gloom. And then by degrees there pierced the sensation of sunlight far overhead, the white of the pallor grew vivid and more luminous every minute, till at length the veil ravelled out, and there were all the precipices and dark forests gleaming and brilliant under radiant sunlight. So at once I arose and set my little flock upon the move, Mafu and the rest up into the heights after more of the Celestial Poppy, while the Mee and I, armed with the rope, adventured into the gully of *Primula citrina*. Up the wall of bamboos we all toiled together, and then the Mee and I diverged round the face of the grassy fell along a tiny hunter's track that led us soon into a dense tangle of shrubs and more bamboo, by which at length we gained the trough of the ghyll immediately above the waterfall, with the face of the stark pink precipice continuing high overhead.

Sandwiched between rock-slabs below and the overhanging cliff above, one has to wriggle up on one's belly for a while in the squeeze of the chink, and then finds one's reward in a very lovely sylvan beck-glen, breathlessly still, tragic and autumnal and gentle, between its huge bastions and cliffs crowding the sky on either hand. But that these, though mere inconsiderable splinters and ribs of the Great Ridge, were such gigantic castles of cliff and dark forest, one might, indeed, have been in some beck-ghyll of the North Country, a glade of ash and hazel old as the hills, in a tortuous jungle of trunks about the

CYPRIPEDIUM LUTEUM—"PROUD MARGARET"

bed of a rivulet in the stony ravine. In the calm beauty of the scene we deliciously advanced over the silence of the fallen leaves, the track continuing dimly up the right bank of the ghyll, with the stream flowing below in a close chine, occasionally widening out into wider caldrons of dank mossy precipice. At last, from the cliff on the right, a sheer curtain-rib of rock some fifty feet in height completely barred the way, offering nothing but here and there a grass tuffet to assist the climber.

And at once came in the use of that rope which with such foresight I had brought, for up with it like a cat, in his string-sandalled soles, went the Mee, and on the rope it did not take me long to follow also. We found ourselves in a ravine yet narrower and lovelier than the last, with the enclosing walls towering higher and more immediately over us than ever. And here, in the silty grots among the fallen boulder-blocks like houses, the citron Primula abounded, still nursing sound seed of the bygone year, and with the current season's fat pods so far ripening that the plants could be taken down to complete the process in boxes in Siku. With a goodly bale of these, then, we went our way onwards into the darkening narrows of the gorge, here darkened yet more by a fir-forest, with Proud Margaret, for a rare eccentricity, growing happily in the moss-heaps round the roots of each tree in that eternal twilight. After this the gorge grew narrower yet, and the Primula ceased, loving the lush lower caves, where it is far finer and larger and laxer of development than in the main Min S'an, but seems quite determined not to ascend to the alpine elevations that have no terrors for it there.

As for the ghyll, we were now ascending to the very top of the beck, and it became a deep cañon, soon blocked

by a dry waterfall between topless grim cliffs. Into the dark and crushing stillness of that imprisoned place there came fluttering the light clatter of hail. We squatted out of reach in the upmost grotto, where the usual boulder up above makes a little cave below, and then we emerged to collect the rare crowns of the Grand-Violet, characteristically at home in its characteristic place. From afar its leaves were recognisable, now developed to their full size, and like a huge violet's, indeed, in form, and in the dark and dusty note of their thick flannel texture, with pallid veinings, lying prone upon the black soil, too heavy for their stout succulent stems of bronzed or blushing tone. And now in the middle of each crown lurked a whitish knop of scales, like a wee bulb of *Lilium auratum*, that was to be the foliage and flower of next year.

In the lower woodland, as we returned, there occurred to me a tall Clintonia with bloomy berries of sapphire or lapis; otherwise there was no novelty, and without event we achieved the descent of the cliff and attained the opener Yorkshire reaches of the glen. And then a new shower, long and very heavy, drove us into a Primula grotto opposite a lovely steep slope of Red Birch and immemorial mangy firs, ragged and weird in outlined pallor upon the driving darkness of the storm. A raging wind arose, and from the cliff's top far above us the harried leaves swirled wildly out against the grey sky, recalling just such another autumn day in a Yorkshire woodland, and the drifting leaves being clutched in air for happy months in the coming year by one whose radiance was already reckoned only by days in the book of the high gods. It was the first moment that the shadow of autumn had fallen across my path unmistakably, and when the clouds had given way once more to

brilliant sun it was sadly and soberly that I returned down to the gîte, meditating on the flight of time and the approaching end of the season.

The descent the next day, too, was marked by tragedy, for, in collecting moss in the side gully, I became suddenly aware that my cherished star-ruby ring had fled from my finger, emaciated by a long course of the uncooking cook; and now lay undiscoverable amid shingle, moss, or mould, let the Mee and me search as long and hard as we could. I cultivated philosophy, but the servants were much upset, and when the news was spread in Siku it might have been thought that my life had been lost, and not my ring (which its shifting star had caused to be considered as a fairy of high quality).

CHAPTER XIX

THE HIGH ADVENTURE

It was not for some days more yet, however, that my solitude was to be relieved. Midnight had fallen, and the city gates had long been shut, when one night there was a clamour in the quiet yard, and I was aware of Purdom arriving amid the plaudits of the staff. A period of dulness and pause followed on this rapturous reunion. He had had too strenuous a time in the Northern Alps, what with weather and the hardships of travel, to be anxious to start off as immediately as I (after my prolonging of the days in Siku) could have wished, for the glens of Ga-Hoba and Satanee. And there was the broken bridge at Nain Dzai, too. How were we to get across the Blackwater? So we sat quiet where we were, and sent the Mafu down the river to Wen Hsien to get the Pleione and the first of our Primulas, while we ourselves undertook the task of sending off the first batch of seeds upon their long perilous journey across the convulsions of the world. Nor were we without excuse from the weather. For now a curious change came over the scene, and instead of the violent vicissitudes of sunshine and brief storm that had marked the summer, cold winds blew over, and for a fortnight veiled the world with a rain-like haar, rarely broken, while Thundercrown and all the ridge retired into such leaden greyness of cloud that no

one could any longer have guessed that they were there. Local politics, accordingly, became the amusement of our leisure, except when the sun came out and allowed me my favourite saunter along the wall and down to the culvert beyond the south gate, where all the clear waters of Siku coalesce, flowing in sheets of rippled diamond over the terraces, under the soft twilight of the willows, till the effect is that of a flooded olive-yard in Liguria.

Our own politics first engaged our attention. These consisted in the dismissal of the cook, our stock of patience by now being so heavily overdrawn that we had to declare bankruptcy in that article. From first to last this wasp-waisted little person, so elegant in his murrey-coloured jersey and blue tights, had proved nothing but a failure, neither able to cook nor caring to try, waspish in tongue as well as figure, so far as his fellows were concerned; and concerned, himself, with nothing but to go out into the town in all his smartness and drink tea with his friends, suspicious people whom he indemnified with gossip. That he had paid his way with this all along the road we soon discovered. For one of his victims now proved to have been the little missionary at Jo-ni, who began to bombard me with volumes of denunciatory tattle about the Mafu, based on what he had picked up from the meat-woman and the cook and the milk-boy in the course of those kitchen confabulations which are bound to be the solace of these lonely souls in exile, with nothing to think about, and sometimes not much to do it with if there were. In this case the evidence was largely based on a letter of the Mafu's which arrived open, and was read to the missionary by his Chinese teacher. As the missionary was acting postmaster and in trust for his mails, this seemed a strange reading of his duties; and when I

suggested this point of view, it was with a gasp of delight that I found his answering letter hailed me as a "friend of Satan."

Apart from this comic element, however, it became clear that the cook had set on foot throughout the country a campaign against the Mafu; and with the mission stations making such a network of scandal all across the country it was evident that the nuisance, already widespread, should as far as possible be quelled at once. Not, indeed, that the Mafu had any claim to be considered an angel of light. A man of such robust temperament has his defects as well as his qualities, and is not to be safely trusted with too much authority out of sight of his employers. None the less, stolen information—and falsely interpreted into the bargain—and the gossip of missionary kitchens afford no grounds for summary condemnation; and in the absence of any corroboration, it was evident that the whole case rested on the machinations of the cook and the excessive eagerness of the missionary to believe evil of one who had differed from his stable-boy on a question of fodder, this latter establishing his case by a liberal use of that word Jesus, which, being taken by such masters as an *ipso facto* proof of veracity, comes in so very handy for dishonest servants, giving them a sure talisman to swear by, in place of their own divinities, by whom they might still have a scruple to perjure themselves so boldly.*

The whole entanglement gave a sample of what dangers one runs from indiscreet frequenting of missionary households in the wilds of China. It was sufficiently

* The Jo-ni Prince also found in this meek little catspaw a ready tool for his own latent grievance against me for having gone so far into the hills; and, for his private contribution to the squall, must not only vilifend my servant in too-willing ears, but also eat up all his Viburnum fruits and throw away the promised seed.

unpleasant, despite the comedies of correspondence, to give me a distaste for the region where such ugly growths could flourish, and it was with joy that we conceived the new notion of going on up to Lanchow for the winter, when our work was done, there to spend the dead season, instead of doing so in Rou Ba Temple, kindly offered for our accommodation by the main body of missionaries, who, it is but fair to say, played no part in these scandals, Mr. Christie himself making me apologies for the trouble into which the indiscretions of his successor at Jo-ni had attempted to bring us, and the pious ardour of discourtesy into which he had been betrayed.

Meanwhile the cook was to go, and not before it was time. For now came long solemn letters of warning from kind old Dr. Smith, the noted zoologist of that district, who had been so won upon by the tales of the Jo-ni kitchens that his letters clearly showed how brightly the fiery torch of scandal was already pursuing our name round the mission-stations of the province—to such a point, indeed, that though we promptly, with the assistance of Mr. Christie, quenched its flames, the smouldering ashes were still to be found next year far up in the mission-stations of the north, such are the facilities of communication in these parts, and the zeal with which they are employed. The minor question, of how we should fare without a professed cook, proved only a matter of idle words. A professed cook who does not cook is of less real profit than someone who does cook without professing. We had fared so very leanly that now the ministrations of the Mafu and the Go-go seemed a translation to the Ritz, and almost at once, with the uncanny appositeness of Chinese life, a neat and charming little person with long black hair flowing

round his shoulders (as in the Quattrocento) seemed to blossom from the ground at our need, and, squatting before us on the veranda, assumed the office of cook, which he thenceforward, in every circumstance of difficulty and danger, discharged with such untiring cheerfulness and zeal that he handsomely earned the name of Good Jang, to distinguish him from Bad Jang, his predecessor, who now went off in the grinning suavity of malice, duly dealt with in the end, but quite unmoved, and chiefly interested in peering through the kitchen window to see what his unlooked-for substitute might be doing to supply his place. Ultimately he had to be dealt with by Great Lord Jang in full Yamun, and thence departed, temporarily brought to better sense, to spread his tale broadcast along his homeward road; with a fleeting visit on the way to the main nidus of his nuisance in the kitchen of Jo-ni.

As for the general situation of the town, this was at present peaceful in the later harvest. But Great Man Pung was under a cloud. There was no more garrison than there had been when we left; the soldiers were still on strike and indistinguishable from the civil population, on whom alone, at need, would have depended the manning of the walls and the safety of the city. The vast yards of the military Yamun were as empty and as silent still as death; and we soon learned that when the Great Man talked so highly of sending in his resignation, what he really meant was that he had got the sack, and was still hanging on in residence, indeed, but shorn of all power (even if there had been anyone to exercise it on), and reduced to a mere private subject, like anyone else, of Great Lord Jang. In this crisis of his fortunes Mr. Pung showed his characteristic philosophy. He confronted the world with a more imperturbable

"Little Bear." Aster limitaneus, sp. nova (var)
In the highest shingles of the Stone Mountains

smile than ever, and every afternoon would take the street in finer and finer silks and satins each day, greeting his acquaintance with an overpowering air of opulence and condescension.

But the hand of the Chinese Government is chancy as fortune, and the turn of Great Man Jang was at hand to feel it. Not to the displeasure of Mr. Pung, in whose favour the wheel came full circle again, after Mr. Jang had blandly refused to lend him a penny, and thereby provoked him to reveal to us the less romantic tale of how the civil power had in reality saved Siku with a bribe. For now arrived an official order recalling the garrison to its post, and conveying to Mr. Pung six months' arrears of pay. Simultaneously the town blossomed out into high festivities on behalf of the Great Lord Jang, who was having a birthday, or celebrating, it seemed, the anniversary of his accession to Siku; and taking advantage of the occasion to reap a plentiful harvest of presents from his people—a fact commented on with acidity by Mr. Pung as considerably damaging the popularity of the occasion, as well as that of Mr. Jang. However, hilarity was the order of the day, and a huge flat scarlet umbrella of state was prepared, with three deep flounces, and long streamers of green satin, tinkling with bells at their tips as they fluttered in the breeze, and proclaimed auspicious sentiments in golden lettering, while others appeared in gold or black velvet round the valances. In much pomp this was presented by the leading citizens, and for several days the civil Yamun was the scene of festivity, made gay with flags and awnings and banners and decorated halberds sent round from the military arsenal for Great Man Jang to feast his friends in return for the umbrella and the presents.

I met the presentation procession advancing up the street one day that I went out in my silken robe and Chinese string sandals to get seed of *Sophora viciifolia,* and to quest vainly for lingering germs in the gaping blackened capsules of the grey flannel Buddleia. And even so, despite the rival attraction, a posse of small gamins attached itself to my heels with jokes and laughter, which caused me to proceed with nose-in-air majesty and a stiff consciousness that I was being made a public mock. There was no dislodging the little people. On my heels they jested and trotted, and a firm blankness was the only weapon possible. Until I reached the grave-coppice I imagined I was feeling the exact sensations of a Chinese dogged, helpless, by urchins in a London street with shouts of rudeness. I was soon to learn my error, for when I got to my bushes and set to work, feeling that the general amusement would now redouble, I found that all my twittering crowd of sparrows wanted was to help me at my task. And the grubby little paws went so busily at the business, and so industriously, that in a trice my basket was full of the bubbly-looking pods, and I next proceeded with my escort up on to the down to look for the fairy Leptoderm and the golden willow Daphne. Imagine such a crowd of European urchins going out after a fantastic stranger only to offer him help and stick to his toil!

When I returned it was to find that the Great Man had sent us down a compliment of red wine in kettles, accompanied by joints of goat and pork, which was followed on the next day by a state invitation to the culminating banquet of the series, very select, with ourselves designed as its especial stars. Dear Purdom, whose facility in getting on with the Chinese is only

equalled by his depression before any prospect of having to do so, manifested no enthusiasm on the occasion; but for me my first Chinese feast was a matter of some excitement and flutter. At four o'clock came the invariable state summons, that all was ready and our arrival expected. In came Mr. Pung to fetch us, resplendent in bowler hat, silvery satin skirt, and crimson bodice; off we went up the cobbled street to the civil Yamun, which we found quite transformed from its habitual dinginess. Now it was very gay all up its courts, with banners and hangings of scarlet silk, and an avenue of big scarlet placards, each with one big character appliqué in black velvet; while overhead hung great lanterns of the sort that pack flat and then unfold in six rays, and then have their sides swathed in a binder of scarlet silk, while tassels long and fringy depend in cascades of pink and green, with jade adornments at intervals, from the dragon-head in which each of the six rays projects above the six-sided body of the lantern.

With due observance we were courted into the guest-hall by the hero of the occasion, and for a while sat down behind in the chairs of state; but in time the other convives appeared, some six in number—the élite of the town, no doubt, but a very dingy, wall-eyed crew—and we all drew up in high chairs to the round high table of scarlet in the midst, on which, to the admiration of the seething horde of menials and underlings who filled the court outside, was already set forth the usual Chinese Zakoushka, so seductive in appearance, piled up on tazzas and saucers in their dainty little dishes and pyramids of hors-d'œuvres, comprising sliced pear, seaweed, shrimps, forcemeat strips, honey ritters, sugared walnuts, and so forth—such a charming

show that, as one browses hither and thither with one's chopsticks, one always runs the risk of eating too much before the actual meal appears. In due time this now proceeded with much pleasantness, but without regularity or order, dish by dish being dumped in the middle of the table for all the guests to dig into simultaneously with the little ladles that last out all the meal for helping oneself, and transferring the food to the tiny saucer, which, with a still smaller one of soy, is all that one is allowed by way of plate. For some time I myself hampered the course of operations by not realising the etiquette of China, which forbids any guest to help himself before the principal one has violated the symmetry of the bowlful with his ladle. As I myself occupied this awful eminence, I did not understand the heavy pauses that at first prevailed, and the hungry glares that converged on me from my fellow-guests; but soon, realising my duty, plunged bravely in, and soon came to the culminating courtesy of choosing out for each in turn some savoury morsel, and depositing it in his dish with bows and smiles, to be in due course requited by similar compliments, administered with similar bows and smiles, to mutual ejaculations of "Glad heart, glad heart!"

Proverbial are Chinese feasts for their length and strangeness. My first, I think, was to me the most enjoyable; for, exquisite as can be the variety and cooking of the dishes, the European taste sickens in time of the invariable sloppiness of the "plats," so many clogged soups of gravy and dish-wash; nor is ever quite able to share the Chinese passion for all food that is insipid to the taste, and at the same time elastic and gelatinous in the eating. Of such are the most famous delicacies such as now defiled before us in due order,

even in these remote wilds, so far from the sea and the shops. Not to remember the order of their appearance, Great Lord Jang treated his guests to the following: shark's fins for a start, the caviare of Chinese luxury, but to a foreigner vapid and gristly as the elvers they resemble; stewed duck of the most excellent; mushrooms; bêche-de-mer or sea-cucumbers, like horrible strips of transparent india-rubber slugs (as, indeed, they are); fish-bellies that were so many fat strips of elastic; pork liver; chicken fried to a chip and quite delicious, followed by chips of mutton in the same style; most savoury slices of bacon stewed in honey, with pork after the same fashion to succeed it, and then stewed mutton; rice-mounds, still with honey, removed by potato fritter-balls with a sweet sauce poured over.

Then came a break with soggy muffins of bread and honey, after which the tale resumed with fat pork, soups, rice custard, garlic broth, and corner dishes of meats, mixed mushrooms, mutton-fat, strips and flaps and slices of pig's belly, spicy little meat-balls, and various other delights, until at last we came to the final rice, which marks the conclusion of a Chinese dinner. On every dish the guests cast glutinous eyes of desire, and devoured it, when I set the signal, with those glutinous noises of appreciation that are so essential a point of Chinese good manners. The whole was washed down with incessant healths of warm wine, poured out from kettles into wee thimbles of agate, and drained to the health of everyone in turn, or to all the company, with a bow and the invitation, "Drink wine." But though the merriment went fast and furious, I could not but think that the large jovial mask of the host looked sad and old in his lost moments, and only at the challenge of a toast fixed on again its mask of cheeriness,

Certainly the conversation devolved wholly upon ourselves and Mr. Pung; for the Great Man talked only for civility, and his other guests, awe-stricken by such a constellation of celebrities, said nothing at all, and contented themselves with the victuals.

At last the feast drew to its close, with the tea that is the invariable finale and signal for departure, after each visitor has wiped his face on the steaming hot towel handed round at the end for the refreshment of lips and brow and hands. A Chinese dinner has this quality, as recommendable for dull English ones as its adoption would be deplorable in the more amusing: Having fully fed and said what one has got to say, one gets up immediately and says good-bye, and comes immediately away without more ado, instead of sitting tediously on over twaddle in the drawing-room for another couple of hours. Accordingly we now all rose from our places like a flight of rooks, and in deep bows and a chaos of compliments took our leave of Great Lord Jang, and departed out into the dark night, Mr. Pung insisting on supporting me with his arm in a manner that I hasten to say was quite unnecessary, but an essential courtesy in Chinese etiquette to give and accept; while crackers saluted our exit, and down the street before us went menials of the Yamun bearing aloft huge lanterns of scarlet and white.

When we got home, Mr. Pung took Purdom into his court to tell him of the iniquities of the Mahomedan soldiers whom we had met in the Nan Hor gorges returning from the inquest into the Tibetan troubles for which they had been sent to Siku. In point of fact, their General had foregathered with a leading prelate over the border, who had so persuaded him with silver that he returned a report to Lanchow saying there had

never been any trouble at all—no Tibetan incursion, no fighting, no wounded Chinese, no operation performed by the foreigners. The news of this report was sold beforehand to the Governors of Siku, who were thus enabled to counter with the truth; but the episode gives a notion of the difficulties under which the Viceroy of a Chinese province labours in his efforts to ascertain the real state of affairs in his jurisdiction.

The festivities were over, and the sun of Great Lord Jang drew near its setting. Back came all the halberds and tassels and the lanterns and their scarlet binders from the civil Yamun to their home in the military, and of the feast nothing remained but the memory of its strange and complicated charm, with its beautiful setting and cordial urbanity of manners so oddly complicated with the grossnesses of incessant hawkings and spittings; and the incongruous savoury meats, often so good, and always so interesting to contemplate. In high pomp, indeed, of silks and satins both the Great Men came to call a few days later. But their visit, which ended in their retiring to a long confabulation in Mr. Pung's apartments, seemed to have no definite object. When Mr. Pung returned to us, it was to tell no more than that Mr. Jang had made himself very unpopular with the expense and exactions of the late anniversary—this being Mr. Pung's annotation, we found, on the Great Lord's refusal to lend him any money to eke out the insufficient dole from Lanchow for arrears.

The blow fell a day or two later. I was sitting out in the yard over a sketch, in the same grey ominous stuffiness that had prevailed for ten days past, but was now shot with gleams of sunshine, in which the snow-powdered tops of the peaks stood pale and clear against

a silver sky above the fluffy rolls of cloud, when in came Mr. Pung, in the glee of news, to tell me that the Great Lord Jang had just received an official letter from Lanchow warning him in a word that his successor in the governorship of Siku was due on the morrow, with no more bones about it. Thus dramatic and violent are the methods of Chinese Government. One day a man may be Viceroy of Kansu, and the next, at a moment's notice, reduced to complete obscurity and ruin without appeal or redress. But whether the blow fell as unexpected as it seemed on Great Lord Jang I find hard to decide, for it looks very much as if that feast and that sedulous raking in of presents may probably have been a making of hay during the last moments of sunshine. Nor had his demeanour at his dinner betokened the unruffled cheerfulness that would have been proper to the occasion had there been no more behind it than a profitable merry-making. All these officers, in fact, have their intelligencers in high quarters, and it may well be that Lord Jang had had secret warning, and determined accordingly to do as well for himself as he could before the end came. Or he may have realised the fate of his colleagues in Kansu, and taken the hint accordingly. For, whether their demeanour during the Wolf trouble may have appeared suspect or inadequate, it is certain that every civil Governor of the walled cities of South Kansu was removed from his office when the scare was over, not even excepting kindly fat old Mr. Jang, whose ten years of fatherly idleness were thus cut short in a minute, though his city, almost alone among the rest, had been preserved from the Wolf, either by his money or by his diplomacy.

Grey and dismal was the outlook, indeed, for that

comfortable old gentleman, long rooted in the soft idleness of Siku. For now in an instant, from being everything in the place, he became nothing at all, and Great Lord Jang sank into the plainest and most unconsidered of Misters. For a few days more he loitered mournfully about the Yamun yards, unregarded by everyone except Mr. Pung, who showed himself consciously kind, and led him round from point to point, a sad plucked spectacle, drooping beneath the long black hair and the inevitable bowler. I had occasion myself to go down and see him on some business before he went. Round into the squalid back-yards of the Yamun we proceeded, and there at last came on Mr. Jang encompassed by papers and the trash of final clearance. There he sat at work, with a collapsed and harassed face, tired and old; and on sight of me suddenly it plumped up into the well-known mask of gaiety and welcome, with the dramatic readiness of a tired woman coming into company. Well, indeed, might he look collapsed, for such an uprooting offered him no further prospects in life, settled as he was and sodden in his present situation. Now, without hope or money or position, he must turn out of Siku like the merest tramp, and betake himself to the Viceregal Court, there to hang around in the inns of Lanchow for many months, or even years, on the chance of his presents bringing him into the Viceroy's notice by means of the high officials, and securing him a new post.

Of this he had little prospect, for his savings did not seem to have made him rich. In a few days later, jogging lonely on a mule, with a pack of bedding on another before him, and the hook-nosed acolyte following behind him with the pipe, Mr. Jang passed unnoticed for ever out of Siku, on his way towards the bleak and frozen

north. We gave him, indeed, all the encouragement and promises of help we could, but there was no avoiding the feeling that that comfortable kindly life was broken and ended. Many months later we found him hanging on in an inn of Lanchow, still waiting day by day for that audience of the Viceroy which never comes to the poor and unimportant. We put a yard of my house there at his disposal, but he preferred to remain closer to the possible summons. At the New Year, when the Viceroy refuses presents officially, yet accepts them by hundreds from all the subordinates of the province, drawn up in rows of many deep in order of rank (the more important gifts of the more important people being accepted by the hands of the high officials, while those of lesser clay are taken charge of by mere underlings), the place of the hook-nosed acolyte, bearing poor old Mr. Jang's little offering of *crême de menthe* and tinned peaches, was far back in the lowest place of the lowest rank, not to be relieved of his burden to the very end of the ceremony, and then with the scorn of some small secretary.

Things looked very ill for the uprooted Jang, ageing and helpless and as out of date as an old frigate. Meanwhile, having by that time the ear of that jovial and weighty personality the Viceroy, I larded my tales with occasional favourable allusions to Mr. Jang; and, whether any credit is due to this or no, the audience was accorded with a promptitude that nobody could have dared to expect, and we soon heard that the ex-Governor of Siku was being despatched into the north to compose a strike there prevailing among the salt-workers, with the hope of better employment if successful. Boldly he undertook the task with joy, and now rides out of the story, still jogging lonely on his mule across the sandy

THE CHOSEN HOME OF THE CELESTIAL POPPY IN THE STONE MOUNTAINS

deserts of the north, with a pack of bedding before him for all his worldly goods, and behind him the hook-nosed acolyte with the pipe. Out into the unknown goes Lord Jang upon his preposterous task. He knows nothing of the north, nothing of salt, nothing of strikes; he will pour oil on the troubled waters with smiles and snoring gurgles; he will weigh the bags that each party proffers, and arrange some compromise in accordance with the heavier. It is the last chance. If he fails, nothing more remains for the broken lonely old life, without money or influence, stranded on failure in the end of its days.

And now upon the vacant scene came heaving the new Great Lord, Mr. Tung, in a splendid dark blue chair with windows of glass, and the scarlet umbrella of his office before him, and a white horse behind, and around him such a retinue of rifled retainers that the town and he may well have quailed as to the means of supporting them; but more especially the town, as the new Great Lord was preceded by an ominous reputation for belief in the stick, and Siku shuddered at the King Stork who had succeeded to the late majesty of Log, and now descended on the town in a cloud of wives and children and great dogs and servants, all to be maintained out of the resources of the place. Lord Tung's very arrival showed him the need of reform, for on the way one of his mules, laden with chattels, fell off the wavering bridge on the Nan Hor, occasioning much wrath and scandal. He was reported, indeed, lying sick with indignation up the road at the very moment when his cavalcade was entering the south gate of Siku. The first act of the Great Lord was to come up and leave cards on us. We took the tactful course of being out, and he duly passed in to make acquaintance with Mr.

Pung, while our own cards went down to the Yamun in return.

With the arrival of the new Governor it seemed as if the clouds were clearing from our plans in all directions. For Purdom began once more to contemplate a move with pleasure, and with the usual miraculousness of things in China it was suddenly discovered that nothing would be safer or easier for us than to go over into the Satanee Alps; and that, though the Nain Dzai bridge continued broken, there still existed another perfectly practicable, though hitherto unmentioned, some half a dozen miles farther down the Blackwater. It only remained for the weather to cheer up, and for the Mafu to return from Wen Hsien. Neither delayed. Hardly had I begun to rejoice in a radiant evening that for once gave hopes of better things, with all the bleary film of the last fortnight cleared from the sky, and the long-lost mountains overhead, than gongs and bells throughout the town seemed to endorse my belief that a change was imminent. Amid angry cloud-banks at last wildly came the moon in a lurid glare, and a royal thunder-storm came surging up from Tibet and raged in splendour down the Satanee Alps and over all the intervening ranges. As I stood out on the dais of justice watching the deluges, horses blundered in through the blind dark, and I thought for a moment they must be Mr. Pung's two ponies, got loose, till a sudden new flash, bright as the moon at her full, showed me the unexpected shape of the Mafu silhouetted on the glare, and bowed beneath his load of Primula and Pleione successfully achieved. After this, all was congratulation and joy. The storm passed on, and a serene full moon flooded a serene world, with the crest of Thundercrown towering high in the ghostly radiance of new snow against the sapphire

velvet of the sky. The change had come, and autumn was born of that fortnight's parturient period of gloom and mugginess. When we awoke it was to a clear and cloudless day of glory, with a Mediterranean tang in the air, snow-powdered crests above, a diamond radiance of sunshine, and all the tops browned already for winter, except where on the high dry hill-flanks across the river far above the little scrubby Berberis had died in the night to sheets of unbroken scarlet, like streams of blood on the stark hillsides.

The expedition rapidly matured after this. Lord Tung was anxious, however, that we should be properly armed and protected for the adventure, and consequently there was an overhauling of the armoury in the military Yamun at the top of the main yard, where on either side are the crowded muniment-rooms, dreary dusty hutches, filled with the minutes and archives, unread for evermore, of bygone centuries, due to be the ecstasy and anguish of Aurel Steins in another two thousand years. In the darkness of the dusty armoury were rows of dusty rusty old helmets, and piled uniforms in stacks, and pyres of arrows, and all sorts of mildewed ancient weapons, with the gunpowder of later days stored in vast Ali Baba jars in wattled cases. Into the dusk of this came Purdom, and nothing would serve me but he should try on one of these derelict panoplies. Magnificent and Norse he looked in his fair handsomeness beneath the glittering peaked casque, with lappets of metal-bossed blue on either side, clad piece by piece in the wadded weight of the blue garments of an impossible heaviness, a-clank, like a cart of pots and pans, with plaques of overlapping metal lining, each secured outside with a stud, in rows of metal blobs, after the effect of a Norman warrior. 'Despite all these preparations,

though, it was only three very ancient guns that were put at our disposal, and no men nor the required passport until we had sent again to the Yamun.

However, everything passed off well in the end, and in a lovely cool day, with a delicious wind, our little procession filed at last down the blazing valleys of the Blackwater, where the baked slopes were now starred with innumerable Asters of pale purple, and a charming little tansy, which in the summer had been so many round balls of enigmatic silver-grey promise, now had blossomed into countless puffs and footballs of solid brilliant gold all up and down the hottest and most barren slopes in the less stony banks of soil. It was cruel to pass Nain Dzai, only a long stone's-throw distant across the impassable furies of the Blackwater, and to realise that one must go on down the left bank of the river and then up the right one to reach it, instead of merely stepping across the big bridge, of which only one side of the span now forlornly impended over the flood. However, there was no help for it, and down the stony distances towards Liang-ja-Ba we now proceeded, tasting the first glory of the persimmons, now turning to opulent splendours of crimson. Long before I could have hoped we came upon the promised bridge, practicable indeed, but so lop-sided and vacillating that it seemed as if a man could hardly cross it, let alone a mule. There were terrible moments when it shook as if it must break down, and with thanksgiving I saw the last animal coaxed and soothed and cajoled across its shuddering arch.

We now made the long, difficult track back up the left side of the Blackwater, cut in the precipitous face of the loess down, that here, in a long wavy wall, sinks away sheer to the river below. Across the steep faces and up and round the projecting shoulders we dipped

and climbed; then down into a deep ravine, and thence along kindlier tracts back into beloved Nain Dzai, where our first host's house was now occupied by two corpses. But we soon found another, not less pleasant, where I was established in a big-roofed loggia that filled the whole upper story of the house, but for rooms on two sides behind me, while down below, through an open pitfall, I could hear the donkeys champing and jingling in their stalls, and a ladder rose up in the midst to the roof above, and in the naked casement was framed the whole magnificence of Thundercrown, blocking the world at the head of the Blackwater Valley, more than a dozen miles away, and built on so vast a scale that its hugest features seem minute details, and one feels on a level with the minute dark spicule of the Pink Temple, which is at least three thousand feet above one's head. In a rapture of content I sat and watched the enormous moods of the mountain. Such a country as this is. For weeks one does nothing, there is nothing to be done, nor any hope of doing things. Then, suddenly, one morning one is going, and on the next day gone, as if there had never been any impediment in one's way from the start.

In and out along the folds of the hill we proceeded up the beck valley the next morning, away from the river and up into the gullet of the Mö-Ping gorge. At the beginning the walk was easy, along flats, after the steep street-flights of the village. The whole scene had a touch of Provence, and the autumn breath of Provence floated in the nip of the air, while the persimmons towered in voluminous glory here and there in the steep bays of the bare fell, dying to their gorgeous tones of bronze and fiery crimson, from which in time they sink to a deader note before the foliage drops, and leaves the

branches bare beneath their burden of brilliant flattened oranges. For it is of the orange that the fruit of the persimmon reminds one in general effect. The whole tree suggests an orange, indeed, of hugely magnified foliage, port, and volume, with the configuration of a rounded immemorial oak of very noble leafage, beset with fruits of orange unaltered in size, but of an even richer intensity of colour, lurking among the metallic or sanguine splendour of the leaves, till their time comes at last to be the sole ornament of the tree's gaunt nakedness.

The flocculent day, having heard me forebode rain, now set itself to clearing, and when we entered the approach of the Mö-Ping ravine, and left the soft lands of the persimmon behind, it was only to confront a new glory in the sumachs and Berberids and Guelders that dappled the overpowering pinnacles overhead from crown to base with a dense mottling of orange, crimson, and vermilion. By contrast the mossy gloom of the ghyll seemed yet darker and more weighty than ever. When we emerged upon its upper lip at Mö-Ping, it was to see the long sylvan ascent to the Red Ridge striking the fortissimo note to this crescendo of autumnal splendour. Dark rose the masses of Armand's pine amid a blaze of colour indescribable, up and up the heaven-high ascent, with splashes of gold and scarlet unbearably brilliant above the general brilliancy, like special flashes in the heart of a furnace; and the wild pears and mountain ashes stood up here and there in incandescent pyramids of a soft vermilion that seemed to throb and pulsate with its own intensity of light.

Arduously we mounted through that woodland all afire with autumn, and here, for the first time dealing with shrubs instead of alpine flowers, we experienced

the sweetness and not the anguish of seed-collecting. For, now that one is marking down special beauties of fruit or leaf-colouring, there is no more the anxiety about having to return here three months later on chance of seed, but the treasure can be pouched and pocketed on the spot in the very moment of discovery. Speedily we grew bunchy on all sides with the rich rubies of Viburnum, the scarlet jewels of varied honeysuckles, and of yet more various Cotoneasters—one with flattened sprays and vermilion fruit, another like a black-berried version of our common *C. congesta*, a third tall and elegant, with a profusion of little maroon cherries in bunches all along its high-arching sprays, a fourth that decks itself in a garniture of jet boot buttons, and another, yet finer in the same style, with upstanding bold habit and clusters of richly glossy ebony fruits. As for the sumachs, these plebeian people belong below, and now their ineffectual fires pale before the blaze of the alpine coppice. No words can paint the scorching glory of Pyrus, maple, and Cratægus in the upper reaches of the shrubbery, in domes and obelisks of sheer colour that seem to palpitate in flame. And on the upmost reaches of the climb the little common Berberis of these ranges takes up its part, and the thorny scrub of the open down becomes an interlacing jungle of vermilion. Often a shy and infrequent seeder, here its bowing three-foot sprays were so densely set all along their length with close clusters of violent scarlet berries that each bush was become a spouting cascade of illuminated blood almost painful to the eye; though, if it will do thus at home, happy the man who first establishes it for covert on his open slopes, even if the beaters, perhaps, may hold other language as they wade through its surf of thorns.

So we approached the wooded col, where gnarled maples made a contorted furnace-fire of gold and vermilion beneath the frosted blue darkness of the silver firs. And there a figure appeared ahead of us on the crest, and then another, and another. Cries and greetings were heard from afar. It was the Shang-yu of Satanee trudging across the Alps to Siku to pay the new Great Lord his tribute of hens and pigs, now cackling and squeaking in baskets on his back, while in his hand he carried a lovely little olive-coloured urn of wild honey as a special present for us. Everybody squatted round in a ring in the middle of the path and talked all together. Joy reigned, and we were hailed back with delight into the neighbourhood, and assured that the heartiest welcome awaited us at Satanee, the monks of Chago and Wu-Ping having been effectively reduced to their right minds by recent visitations. Accordingly, with light hearts we sped the Shang-yu on his way to Siku,* and ourselves continued the long and devious descent to Ga-Hoba beneath a sky now so grey and chill that yet more mournful than they might have been seemed the stony labours of the peasants who were washing for gold in the dammed-up shingles of all the becks that flow from the Red Range. We cheered ourselves with the foreknowledge of a warm reception in Ga-Hoba from Mar-Mar Tanguei, and with the sight of a new spindle-tree, a round-headed tree so densely covered with bunches of coral-coloured waxy fruits that the effect was of some rosy cherry in profuse bloom.

* Here he was collared by Great Lord Tung and laid by the heels in prison till he should have paid up Satanee's arrears of tribute. In gaol we found him on our return to Siku, and in gaol there seems no reason why he should not have lain till the end of his days had we not ransomed him from durance by paying his debt, amounting to 4,000 cash, which is about ten shillings.

But a rude disillusionment awaited us. When we arrived in Ga-Hoba Mar-Mar was cordial, indeed, and comely as ever, but quite firmly determined not to offer us accommodation, though her house was a professed inn and its doors still open. Vain were all her pretences about a new daughter-in-law; it was evident that the pressure of public opinion in the Tibetan villages of the district had thoroughly impressed on Mar-Mar the unwholesomeness of entertaining foreigners. A great scandalum now arose, with everybody clamouring at once. The headman had to be sent for to administer a harangue. It had no effect on the smiling fixity of Mar-Mar's determination, and all the servants now contributed a chorus of comments, while the Mafu stood silent by with a face every moment getting more and more like that of a dour gorilla; and Mar-Mar, who believes in patting as a panacea, clutched Purdom by the lapels and patted him profusely in deprecation. And then suddenly into the impasse, when everyone else had had their say, the Mafu irrupted with a roar of rage, and in a convulsion of fury, torrential as the floods of the Blackwater, threatened Mar-Mar with the wrath of our friend the new Lord Governor of Siku. Instantly and without cavil or ungraciousness the whole opposition collapsed, and Mar-Mar passed in one second from a defensive attitude to one of such warm welcome that Purdom, intimately tickled by her redoubled fondlings, could only burst out laughing and follow her indoors, with all the staff on his heels.

It now became a question how we were to get over into the woods of Chago after seeds of the Dipelta. This, indeed, we had already found in the copses of the Mö-Ping Pass. But the chaffy-winged capsules had not been common, and had proved so very rarely

to have a fertile germ inside that it was evident, to have any fair chance of raising the plant, we must get at least a sackful of seed to overcome the low percentage of sound ones. And there was also that one stray bush of the grey-flannel Buddleia, which, having been in flower so long after its brethren (in the hot districts to which the species is native) had passed over, it was hoped might still be retaining seed long after all theirs had fallen. But there was no question of going there openly. Subterfuges and substitutes and disguises became the matter before the house. The Mafu was ruled out of court at once, his ugliness being so rare and special that he was bound to be instantly recognised by the monks and populace. And in the end, the only hopeful plan was for us both to go ourselves as coolies.

The plan offered neither drawback nor impediment, and its dramatic elements roused my enthusiasm; until its dark side was pointed out to me, and in unavailing revolts of bitterness I had to admit that gold teeth were not fashionable wear in Tibet, and their blatant presence in the mouth of a coolie would be more especially certain to rouse unfavourable comment. There was no getting over the difficulty. I have no gift for keeping my mouth shut, and it was felt that even a respirator would be sure to raise remark. After many struggles I had to accept the inevitable: to Purdom alone were to belong the peril and glory of the expedition. It was settled that he and the donkey-man were to go, and get as near Chago as was necessary, Purdom posing as the donkey-man's cousin from the New Province on his way down to find a wife in Szechuan. My part in the proceedings lay only in the preparations, and our evening in Ga-Hoba was spent in arranging the details of disguise. Filthy old tattered coolie clothes were collected: padded

breeches, grey with the grease of years, and with the wool bursting here and there from the rents in the quilting, and their seat a bulge of disreputable ruin; ankle-bands and string sandals; cap, waist-cloth, and grimy waistcoat; pipe and pouch borrowed from the Mafu. Off now came the elegant moustache for the dress rehearsal, and the fair head was bound about with a blue bandeau. The question of complexion propounded serious problems. To conquer his healthy North Country roses I revolved various cunning decoctions, and was actually busy over a hell-broth of chocolate and ink when brilliantly, as by inspiration, the notion of burnt cork occurred to my tardy mind. In a trice the job was done. In place of Purdom's former jovial beauty there now slouched up the most villainous and magnificent coolie it is possible to imagine, a ruffian of daunting stature and murderous mien and a most dour and darkened dreadful countenance. The servants teetered in ecstasies of joy at this transformation, and the Go-go's giggles threatened to become hysterical; but from Mar-Mar and her husband the proceedings were concealed. Only the flashing blue eye now resisted all efforts at modification. Spectacles, which might have solved the problem, were out of the question here for a young hearty coolie, so abysmally far down in the social scale that such an affectation would have been unthinkable. Finally it was concluded that in all danger-spots he should lower his eyes to the lighting of his pipe, and occupy himself with this whenever passing villages or villagers.

At crack of the weeping dawn he was off, with sack on shoulder, to trudge all those long perilous miles through the chill and sodden daybreak. I cursed those expensive and brilliant dentures that have made me

twin brother in all but eloquence to St. John of the Golden Mouth, and felt a thousand vicarious terrors all day far more keenly than I should ever have cared about any of my own. Tamely I came and went on safe and harmless duties through the pouring rain. I climbed up into the deep ghyll behind the village, and collected seed of a little rock-lilac there that I hoped might be the same as that flaring beauty I had seen in spring down across the Satanee Hor in the moment of our flight from Satanee. But above all I went for the second plant known to me, the only duplicate I am certain of, to that lovely little honeysuckle of mine of which the one original specimen had been sighted in the copse just above Chago. Its only other sample here overhung the beck from a high shoulder of precipice in the depths of this ghyll, and had been a pure joy in spring with its flat-tiered sprays of tiny foliage, from which by twos and threes dripped its showering exquisite trumpets of soft pink.* The honeysuckles of this kidney (seeming large types from which this miniature may perhaps be only a very rare variation) pass to an added beauty in their fruit, which are like round rubies or drops of illuminated blood hanging from the underside of each bough on stems so fine that they really seem detached sparks of red light hovering in the darkness of the green. But in the ghyll of Ga-Hoba my species had already lost all its seed, and there was nothing for it but to hyke up the whole bush bodily—a task I entrusted to Mafu and the coolie, while I myself went home to drag out the murky leaden hours of raw cold till dusk, when there came a stir outside and shrieks from Mar-Mar, sitting down backwards in a basket of beans from sheer horror, as in strode Purdom, cold and

* *L. Farreri*, sp. *nova*.

"THE MOST VILLAINOUS AND MAGNIFICENT COOLIE IT IS POSSIBLE TO IMAGINE." PURDOM IN DISGUISE

wet and tired and tattered and filthy beyond belief, but triumphant in a sackful of Dipelta seed across his shoulder, and in his pouch even a fat packet of that precious lonely Buddleia, which had duly justified our hopes of it by still retaining a quantity of good seed.

All had gone well with his expedition. The donkey-man had been fluent with his tale to peasants and villagers alike, covering his poor unintelligible barbarian cousin of the New Province from any necessity for conversation, beyond the merest words of greeting and passing the time of day. The monks, indeed, had stared suspiciously and long at this strange stalwart figure in their streets; but the pipe-lighting had answered, and the downcast eye did not betray its colour. And so at last, untroubled, they won through to the alpine forests on the slopes under Chago, dived into their sylvan fastnesses, and spent a long day among the winged pale keys of the Dipelta. The day would, indeed, have been longer, and the harvest even richer, had it not been for the misadventure that brought both to an end; for, having insensibly mounted the hillside till they were close below Chago itself, Purdom and his companion, descending in a little gully of coppice above the path, came suddenly upon a burly Chagolese just rounding the turn. For a moment he did not catch sight of them, frozen into sudden immobility in the brushwood above; but then he lifted his eyes, and stood petrified at the sight of so appalling a brigand descending on him out of the wild forest, where only a brigand would be. With pallid lips he stammered an answer to their greetings, and then precipitately turned upon his tracks and fled headlong back to Chago with his news of a robber-army at large in the mountains. Purdom accordingly, realising that it is much the same thing to be shot

for a bandit as for a foreigner, decided to seize this opportunity of drawing his investigations to an end before all Chago should issue forth against him like a roused hive; and retired immediately down the hill again and back to Ga-Hoba, untroubled, beneath his ample burden of spoils.

The alpine autumn was already heavy in this cold district; dark and dreary was the change from the crisp radiance of Siku to the glacial murk of the mountains. Having ransacked the Sacred Wood, now very beautiful and sad and autumnal with fallen leaves, for the bloomy blue-black berries of Disporon, we addressed ourselves once more for Satanee, and on the eleventh of October found ourselves, contrary to every expectation, riding up in triumph to the gate of the Miao, now more dilapidated than ever, leaning every minute more and more lop-sided on its pillars, and shedding faces of its towers to each autumnal deluge. It seemed incredible to think we should actually be back here, and yet, in another instant, Abbot Squinteyes was giving us the rapturous welcome of long-lost children, and the whole village soon gathered in the grassy court to greet us and hear the news of Siku and their new overlord. Gradually the raw day came down in dark and deluges of rain. Life was scantly kept in us by the abbot's present of hot *vin ordinaire*, a weak decoction like a dilution of the stuff they give you to drink at the Hotel de la Poste on Moncenisio, and in colour resembling dirty painting water—quite a different affair from Chinese wine, and by no manner of means so cordial.

The morning, however, showed signs of clearing, and the high tops appeared all white above the clouds against a sky of iron-grey, and their skirts of alpine forest flowed dark as night beneath, illumined here and there by

the pale fires of the larch above the chaotic blaze of the lower woodlands. We descended to the river, and thence up round the headland to the right, along a level woodland walk that gave one exactly the feeling of treading some drive in an English wood on a shooting-day in November. Smell, air, and the cold decadent loveliness of dead or fallen leafage were all the same; but for the lack of radiance in the still sad day, this was the very alley where Wentworth talked of Anne, except that nuts and blackberries were here replaced by Jew's mallows and ribes in their last stages, and by the over-arching splendour and profusion of Acanthopanax in voluminous ivy-like domes of glittering black berries, hanging high and far out from the hedges over the yellowing leaves like those of small horse-chestnuts.

In the Bastion gorge, to which we at last attained, the maples here and there made blazes of intense glory against the gloom, amid the inky darkness or silvern blue of the firs upon the converging cliffs. Here, in the mossy face of the crag, the coolies took to acrobatics after seeds of the Rock-nymph Primula. I left them at their task (roaming like flies, it seemed, on the walls of the cliff), and advanced up through the maws of the ravine to its higher reaches to inspect for Silvia in the bamboo brake. Not a trace could I there discern, though, poke I hither and thither in never so earnest a search—neither leaf nor stem nor pod—but the bed was all a moist deep wreckage of fallen leaves and the accumulated mould of the bamboos. So in dishcartenment I came down the torrent-bed again, questing seeds of the tall alpine hazel, a fine tree which has the fantasy of carrying its fruits clustered in a big buzzly prickled ball, for all the world like the husk of some big sweet chestnut, with several nuts embedded instead of one.

Here, however, there are perfect hazels that you would never tell from their English cousins, were it not for the thorny fuzz in which they lurk. They are difficult and chancy things to gather, though. All the nuts in all the prickle-balls that had fallen proved already weevilled and useless, and though with difficulty I knocked down more from the high-waving branches overhead, and selected thence only the most central nuts of the most Louisa Musgrove soundness, very few even of these proved to contain fertile kernels. Now rain came on. I sat under the shelter of the cliff contemplating the glorious blots of colour that dappled the steep woodland up and up on either hand, while Purdom went into the gorge, and after an hour's hard labour retrieved my failure with the Primula by discovering at last a few of the very frail roots which are all it makes, and a certain number of pods still lying commingled with the mould and fallen leaves. After which the party returned home in good spirits, and I seized the opportunity of going to church.

For Abbot Squinteyes now had much more to do than merely to booze and guzzle and sit cosy with his wives. There had swept over Satanee what is known as a quickening of Church life, and I could not understand the reason, until at last, in learning it, I grasped for the first time the full hugeness of the European War. For now in every monastery and abbey and hermitage, through all the dominions of the Buddhas, from Lhasa to Urga, the whole congregation of the faithful was busy day and night in prayers and rites and aspirations for the passing of the dying over in Europe. Word had gone out from Lhasa, they told me; and told me, too, that these devotions aimed only at blessing the Allied Armies. But I hope they told me this in flattery, for

it could not be in the spirit of the Dharma to exclude from blessing those who most needed it—the thousands of miserable souls driven out on a dark road by their own choice of ill directors. In any case, throughout all the holy places lurking in the folds of the huge Tibetan ranges the whole force of the Church was at work, holding the hand of those in pain and terror across the world. The song of good-will went up incessantly, and even in Satanee the Church erupted in some half a dozen daily services. To meet this demand Abbot Squinteyes had been reinforced by five or six fresh monks, with instruments and acolytes, and a new hideous little gilded image of the Perfect One to sit aloft on the high-altar in the dusty darkness of the church immediately over the ambo on which the abbot, with bell and bolt in hand, would take his place cross-legged for the services, with the monks kneeling on their heels in two parallel rows before him down the aisle on either side. In due course of each office would proceed the chants and litanies, varied by reiterated thumps on two big skin drums at the end, beaten by a pair of little purple acolytes who thoroughly rejoiced in their job; while the abbot, with his silvery bell and pedlar's miniature gong, periodically gave the signal for so awful a cataclysm of noise from drums, cymbals, conches, bells, and two beautiful raw-voiced brazen trumpets with mouths of dragons, that the general effect was only comparable to the dying of a duck or the rending of trousers in some titanic convulsion of nature.

Apart from these choral interludes, however, the services had their own impressiveness in that dim old cavern of darkness and dust and dirt, as the chants and lessons and litanies and antiphons proceeded, intoned with the typical universal priestly unction in a sombre

solemn drone. Not, indeed, that the flesh was not sometimes weak, and there were moments when the abbot, who had brought up copious stores of food and drink to one of the cells across the yard, so freely heartened himself with the bottle that his holy person titubated deplorably round the court, and the service had to be postponed until he should be less uncertain of the responses. As these moods of His Holiness flowered principally in a quite embarrassing degree of admiration for my personal beauty—a point on which only Tibetan wine in quantity could carry conviction to my most fervent admirers—I hailed at last the transference of his devotional energies to a wider sphere of influence, and was glad when the order of the Church removed his pontifications to the open fellside.

I had gone up alone that day into the hanging Sacred Wood that impends over the village. I had spent the afternoon toiling at a harvest of various seeds, and was just beginning to turn my feet homewards, when suddenly I was aware of an outburst of gunshots below, repeated, countless and disorderly, with catastrophic blares of horns, shouts, and banging of drums. I immediately concluded that this could only be the Chagolese invading Satanee by surprise, or perhaps the Tepos from Tibet; and descended with delicate caution to where I could peer down through a screening bush on the village and its green slopes at my feet. No war or bloody struggle met my eye. All the male inhabitants, to an accompaniment of gunshots and crackers, were proceeding forth in a straggling mob towards a certain point on the hillside (but the ladies stayed thronging behind on a wall) in attendance on all the monks; and at their head the abbot, no longer to be known, in full pontificals of golden cope and towering crested mitre, like some

huge Roman helmet or cocked hat, worn very far back and heavily crested with mustard-colour fringe.

In high pomp the procession of microscopic figures moved across the sad and sodden green of the autumnal fell to where, upon an eminence, was some white trophy on a stick, and two mounds that looked like haycocks. Clearly it was the annual blessing of the fields, for now the abbot advanced alone to these rustic altars, waving the yak-tail whisk that exorcises the evil powers of the air. The guns left off for a while, and the sound of chanting and intoning rose dimly from the depths into the quiet greyness of the afternoon. The service thenceforward continued in a new outburst of shots, crashing out over the chorales of drums and trumpets and horns that now devastated the stillness with their blaring roars. After which fire was put to the haycocks, and soon nothing was left but smoking ruins, round which the dogs of the village were gathered, while all the monks and their parishioners had returned to the Miao, there to hold a mighty pow-wow of merriment in the courtyard. Such a handsome splendid set of fellows as they were, too, for the most part, and some with faces of an exotic refinement and charm that might have emerged from some chlorotic canvas of Sir Edward Burne-Jones. One of the monks had caught a small kestrel with stern little wise Egyptian face, and now played with the beautiful aeroplane-like creature on a string, as if it had been, indeed, the insensate kite its shape suggested.

CHAPTER XX

GOOD-BYE TO THE ALPS

THESE were diversions. Our own work lay elsewhere, and ere long it became possible for us to move up for a time into camp in the heart of the Alps up in the end of that break in the range which occurs immediately opposite Satanee. Life in these wilds is a perpetual succession of impassable barriers that in a moment suddenly dissolve into wraiths of cloud. When one remembered the circumstances of our leaving Satanee, and the extreme improbability that had long prevailed as to our ever being able to return even there, it now seemed perfectly preposterous that without the slightest difficulty, opposition, or suggestion of danger we should now be peaceably advancing up into the wild heart of the range. Yet so it was. Down to the beck proceeded our cavalcade, and over the collapsing bridge, and up to the sacred spruce knot opposite; and thence along and along the folds and fields and fells of the valley towards its top, with the enormous volumes of the Bastion woodland rolling down upon us in a leisurely complicated splendour of glens and valleys from the right, while on the left towered stark towards the clouds the wall of dark firs that slips so sheer away from the flanks of the Felsenhorn and the lesser peaks behind him. On the way the track descends into an enchanted glade like something in fairyland, with a diamond waterfall

descending into the glistering depths amid fantastic pinnacles and little cliffs with firs. The sudden drop into that delicious dwelling of the nymphs reminded one of the surprises you sometimes come on in the foot-hills of Provence; and in the radiant autumn day there was still a Provençal note in the air that added to the suggestion.

And so we came to the head of the valley, and began to appreciate the complexity and size of the country. For here converge the three or four gigantic gorges that cut into the mountain land behind, and make it a labyrinth of abysmal cuttings between mass and mass—as difficult a ground to explore as well could be, even in the favourable time of high summer. At the top of the valley, and all around, tower huge walls of fir-forest, dark as night, with their summits not to be guessed. But even these are but the basement of the real wall, and even this but the pedestal from which aspire the gigantic peaks and bulks of the range. Down in the heart of the valley, though, cut the inviolable twilights of the ravines, deep in forest, with the precipices far overhead, higher and higher, one over another, till the eye attains the terrifying altitude of the crests that flow from the Felsenhorn; while opposite, in front, you have rampart over rampart of fir-forest, in its darkness and its monotonous serrations of its rocky skyline—for you are too close beneath them to see the highlands they support, or to have any notion of the main Alps above—suggesting a view in the Cottians or Maritimes, as it might be the upper reaches of the Boréon or the Chiabotta del Pra. And immediately on your right, so far overhead that it is foreshortened and seems every moment likely to crash down upon you, the shoulder of the Bastion, with snow on all its lines, peers down

over a shoulder of mountain that sinks towards you in undulations of blazing woodland; and, in its own enormous majesty (suggesting the Crozzon de Brenta), gives not the slightest hint of being the mere insignificant footstool that it is to the towering real majesty of the Castleberg masses behind, from this point only visible as hints, behind the Bastion, of blue towers and pinnacles. And here, in this last back of beyond, there is a bay of culture and quiet fields amid the encircling precinct of black forest, and to this remotest corner of the world come creeping for refuge such evil people of China as have made even Siku and Kiai-jô too hot to hold them. This is the Ultima Thule of Da Hai Go, and on the hill-sides about the beck are rows of cottages sloping so sidelong beneath their burden of thatch that they look as if they were momentarily collapsing beneath the burden of their inmates' wickedness.

In the midmost glen brawls the beck, and here is built over it a little mill-house in which we proceeded to fix ourselves, shortly visited by all the local scoundrels from the tenements up above, who, like so many scoundrels in life, proved much more engaging people than the prudent and virtuous. Eight families in all there are who have sought the sylvan seclusion of Da Hai Go. They came and passed courtesies, and there was quite an unexpected bustle in that tranquil lonely vale, where only silence seemed as if it ought to have its home. The one drawback of this populousness, however, now made itself felt; for, after having left the mill-house bare and empty and unused for years, the good people of the place no sooner saw us in residence there and our things unpacked than they developed a strong desire to grind corn there once more, and we were driven into the wild hills while they did it, only to return and find

everything embedded under a soft layer of whiteness.

Nevertheless, we had a notable expedition up into the folds of the range, if only that it showed us the difficulties and possibilities that would await explorations more fortunate in their season. Up into the ravine on the right we plunged, with vistas of other narrower deeper gullies opening out in the forest at every step, with more and higher views of more and more awful white peaks, more awfully high, closing each at its end. Soon we were blocked by an impasse, and had to shin up the chink of a precipice that impended over the torrent, and then down along its ledges on the upper side till at length we regained the hunters' track, which thence continued astonishingly well marked in the wild woodland, being, in point of fact, an almost unknown line of communication between Siku on the northern and Nan-Ping on the southern side of the range, down in Szechuan. In the forest the walk was very lovely. It was now the last edge of autumn; silently the leaves were weeping from the trees in the stillness of the sparkling clear morning after frost; on all sides towered up the stark fir-clad steeps of the lower mountain-walls, dark as night except where lit by the pale-gold flames of the larch. Underfoot in the wood the tread fell muffled on a couch of drifted deadness, and overhead in the calm azure shone, above the aspiring ramparts of the firs, the high snows, gleaming unapproachably far above mountains that seemed themselves to shut out heaven. On we went and on, realising anew the scale of vastness on which these Alps and valleys are constructed. Not even from the mill-house would there ever be the slightest possibility of reaching any fair height in the day, so interminable and deep are the gorges, so gigantic

the successive ascents out of them to the supreme heights.

It was bitterly tantalising gradually to see unfolding above us enormous tiers of Alps, unattainable unless one could have come up here to camp in a propitious time of the season. By degrees we got behind the shoulder of the Bastion, and saw its mass behind us joining on to the main bulk of dolomitic masses in front, though at the end of its high-domed undulations there came what looked as if it might easily be a complete break between it and the naked cliffs and gullies beyond. After a time the track bifurcated, and we renounced the Nan-Ping direction that wandered south amid interminable undulations of spruce forest, and addressed ourselves to the right up the dwindling beck-bed, where the Rock-nymph Primula was luxuriant in the dank cliffs; and so at last, with all our labours, it was already afternoon before we debouched into the upmost level of the glen, and found ourselves imprisoned on all sides by a titanic cirque of naked peaks and precipices of overwhelming height, recalling the massive walls that close in that caldron of desolation up behind the Grasleiten Hut, but on a scale far wilder and grander and more vastly savage. We stood in the wide beck of white limestone shingle, where the glossy-leaved tree Rhododendron of all these alpine woodlands was springing in myriads of seedlings in the calcareous scree, and catching the sun in a myriad points of light; while their parents threw long lucent crowns of foliage above on either side the stream in a dense aged tangle in the rubble of the banks; and along the surfaces of the shingle a little orange-berried honeysuckle of dusty grey-green leafage sprawled flat across the floor, or mounded itself in shallow intricate hillocks here and there. Overhead, all round, the barren tortured

"A CIRQUE OF NAKED PEAKS AND PRECIPICES"

convolutions of pinnacle and precipice imprisoned us overwhelmingly with their walls, on which the sun was now cutting the harsh shadows of afternoon in wrinkles and ripples of black upon the rosy grey of their unutterable nakedness.

Gully-sides led up to the opener great downs behind, and others in front led up to the stark foot of the amphitheatre between the ribs of dark forest that shelved away down from their immediate base to the head of the glen, where the various rents of the hillsides converge in so many deep little dark dank ghylls of limestone, little only by comparison with the unseizable hugeness of the whole scene; and each lovely shattered cascade that fills them is in reality a considerable waterfall spuming from aloft amid spruce-clad pinnacles and precipices that are the tiniest of incidents on such a stage. In one of these ghylls, too, I found the sad sere wreckage of a new Primula,* but of life there was no longer any sign. The calm grandeur of the cliffs, the austere air, with its crushing everlasting weight of silence, the slanting gleams of the dying day across the desolation, all seemed so many manifestations of the universal death that broods upon the Alps in the close of the year.

And yet, so fascinating were the suggestions of that high place, that we deliberated long as to whether we should return empty down to the mill-house (seeing that there was now no question of getting any height achieved, and of then regaining home before dark), or whether we should brave starvation and the deadly chills of dawn up here in some cave, on the chance of keeping out mortal cold with three sausages; and then on the morrow reach at least one of those vast downs before returning, on the chance of there finding some Primula poking up

* *P. septemloba*, almost surely.

gravid pods through the snow, and, anyhow, of gaining a notion as to the floral suggestions of those heights. For awhile we dallied with our death, but at last decided that without proper food or any coverings at all, there might prove to be less certain and more pleasant forms of suicide than to affront the alpine night and the alpine dawn in some scanty grotto of the cliffs. The saddening afternoon assisted our decision, for all the sky and summits were now greying over in cloud-layers as we descended the long distances of the woodland through the upper forest of spruce and Rhododendrons, moss-grown and primeval as in the glooms on Chagoling; and giving way in time to sumptuous deciduous forest, where in the emerald corruption of the fallen trunks the Wood-nymph Primula was already copiously uncurling her crinkly starfishes of Primrose foliage. On the way down we circumvented the chasm, and arrived without event back at the mill, determined now by hook or crook to take some sort of protection up into the top glen, and there do two or three days of camping, if only to spy out the ground. Of transporting tents and other baggage through the intricacies of the brake and among the incessant cliffs and difficulties of the forest there could be no question—no carriers, not even of China, could achieve it—but we built on managing the transport of such indispensable rugs and wrappings and provisions as might guarantee us against death by cold or starvation, if the weather would permit.

This seemed improbable the next morning, which broke dimly, with a dark deep pall of cloud right down everywhere within five hundred feet of us, obliterating the upper world in motionless murk. Purdom, however, went off on an exploration up the left-hand gorge, which winds away deep in the woodland round behind the

lateral spurs of the Felsenhorn, to where the pitiless precipices at the back of the big peak seem to shut out all farther advance with their tremendous naked walls. As for me, seeing the clouds inclined to rise, I went off on my own account up amid the coppice that rises behind the cultivated slopes of the cottages, and was now aflame in a riot of sumptuous fires, from gold to hottest scarlet, of unimaginable glory and variety and bewildering blaze, filling all the flanks and dips and undulations of the forest side, up to the beginning of the midnight spruce-curtains, with a rolling furnace as palpitating as the multitudinous glow of *Azalea mollis* in May over the downs of Japan.

My object was one high point above a gully, where stood a pyramid of sheer incandescent vermilion, cheek by jowl with the frosted silver blueness of a spruce. I hoped that this might be a specimen of the best maple among all those that glorify these alpine woods—which, being the best, and consequently rare, had also been the only one that hitherto had given no sign of seed. However, it merely proved the common mountain ash of these parts, a fine-leaved delicate twin to the rowan, but of comelier closer habit, and with this superb gift of autumn colouring, enhanced by bunches of white-wax fruit, enclosing coral-pink seeds in their snowy beads of blancmange-like pith. These I collected, and then proceeded to pack myself into lumpish unshapeliness with pockets full of seed of Adenophora, Astilbe, and the gigantic Spiræa that here replaces *S. Aruncus* on a slenderer but far more noble scale, with airy plumes of foam that can attain four feet in length, and crest the hedgerows and coppice edges with their surf exactly as in similar situations of the Alps you see *S. Aruncus* making hedges or mounded bushes of aspiring creaminess.

There was no hurrying, in that grey leisurely sadness of the day. I had a feeling that the hills were saying good-bye to me, as I sat and contemplated the glory of the gold and scarlet woodlands sweeping up on all sides to the sombre precipices of firs that everywhere vanished soon and simultaneously in the level layer of the clouds. When it became time to go home I cast down my eye, and saw that the gully beneath offered me a much easier way to the mill, over stretch below stretch of smooth green sward. Accordingly, down the red ravinated sides of the gorge I slithered and slid into its far depths, only there to discover that my nice smooth turf was in reality a three-foot deep sargasso sea of bowed and bent vetch and artemisia intertwined into a uniform surface inexpressibly wearisome to wade through, with feet lifted high at each step to clear the clogging clinging mass. When I got back I was almost as tired as Purdom, who shortly afterwards returned with no good news, from a stodge as long as yesterday's, which had shown him nothing, neither plants nor ways up on to the heights, but only snow pitilessly falling up above, and all the uplands veiled in a white despair of darkness. There could now be little doubt that the Alps, indeed, were shutting up their shop for the winter, and our plans for going high into camp looked pale, unless it might be that the night might bring frost and clear the air again for a spell that should at least let us get up on to the heights and form a guess at their possibilities through the snow.

But in the morning we woke to see the death-sentence of our hopes. Down went the temperature all night, and down came the snow, and in the morning the alpine winter had descended on the world with a crash like a lid of lead. The air was still and full of death.

The vast banked walls of forest on every hand were turned to a motionless filigree of heavy silver, paling away upwards and upwards, till at last they faded quietly into the quiet universal greyness of the sky, with the tragic melting softness of an old Chinese picture; while at their feet the fires of the forest were dulled and filmed with a massive bloom of rime, and round the mill-house on the floss only the nettles still kept that sullen look of life which it is their unenviable privilege to maintain so far into the dank end of autumn. Clearly there was no more, then, to be done in those Alps till spring should once more unlock them from their sleep, and break up the uniform deep blanket of snow beneath which they were now gone finally to bed for the winter. Accordingly, there was nothing for it but to pack our chattels and return to Satanee, where the winter's cold, shrilling on grey winds up and down the valley, was yet more difficult to bear than in the comparative shelter of Da Hai Go. The very last tail-end of the alpine season is always a grim and lowering moment for those who love the hills and their children, and as I sat and shivered in the squalling draughts of the loggia I had often, like Anne Elliot, "to struggle against a great tendency to lowness." Good little Jang assisted me, however, with his unceasing efforts to tempt our appetites; and I never more appreciated the qualities of a Chinese than when I used to watch this exquisite small person, spotlessly tidy, and of an almost girlish delicacy of charm, perpetually smiling and cheerful and hard at work, in conditions of cold and snow and wet and discomfort which must have been as perpetual a keen anguish to him as plodding through cold mud to a clean little cat. It seemed a shame to have brought him into such trials, yet there he was unrestingly at work, as

cheery with his gentle fluting voice over the pots as if he had all appliances about him, in a comfortable kitchen in a comfortable warm dry town.

The raw and bitter cold now prevailing with the first fall of winter snow down even upon the châlet-roofs of Satanee made it seem almost incredible that only just over the ridge behind Siku, lay snugly basking in the dry brilliant sunshine of the Blackwater Valley. To that happy bourn it was evidently time for us to return, and on the nineteenth of October, escorted by half the village, and with hearty farewells from all the rest, we rode for the last time out of Satanee, showering promises of a speedy reappearance as we went. For it is the height of bad manners ever to admit, in any friendly Tibetan village, that you are going away for ever. Nothing so much offends and distresses your kindly hosts, and unvarying etiquette demands that, whatever your plans may be, and may be known to be, you should always make your leavetaking au revoir, and not adieu. The cold rawness of the air was penetrating, and the mountains stayed undiscoverable in cloud. As we rode up the windings to the col the chill became more and more agonising, and rime and snow prevailed over all the scrub. In Ga-Hoba there was more shelter, and comparative comfort. Mar-Mar Tanguei lay sick upon a bed, and no opposition was made to our re-entry with our Tibetan friends.

But the sodden gloom was depressing. We all sat shivering round the fire-pan in the dense corroding cold throughout the afternoon, with occasional sucks through a bamboo from a vase on the hob filled with fermented grains, and replenished again and again with water, this brew representing the *premier cru* of Ga-Hoba. Cowering in the pervasive polar draughts that

swept in on every side we chatted and laughed with our guests, and I tried to calculate how long it would be, at their present rate of spitting, before they would have spat themselves entirely empty. In the middle of the party a witch doctor in fantastic weeds and a woolly mask came to the door with a magic chant. The Tibetans roared themselves silly with laughing to see him drop his woolly mask and run when the opened door revealed an irreverent foreigner, who threw a cup of tea over him. For these gentry, with their lusts and their exactions and their spells, are only a less pest to the country than the wind-and-water doctors themselves —a set of scoundrels who dictate every detail of your life, from the angle at which your doorway shall front the street, and the height to which your roof may reach without attracting jealousy and disaster, to the precise point and aspect which you shall finally occupy in your coffin on the open hillside. With endless opportunities for illicit gains in every kind, these horse-leeches are the pardoners and indulgencers of China, and as popular here as their prototypes in the literature of our Middle Ages.

On the next morning, it was farewell to Ga-Hoba and Mar-Mar Tanguei. We woke to find snow everywhere, and evidently more to come, and the cold intense. Up the steep red hill we toiled and clambered, and the poor little cook kept as cheery as a lark, in attendance on my pony, hopping from stone to stone in the raw red morasses of slush into which the trodden snow had turned the path, only now and then admitting a little qualm of horror when some extra douche of red sludge splashed up over the unvarying white specklessness of his socks. Yet it was only with the greatest difficulty and for the briefest intervals that I could persuade him to take a turn on the pony, so faithful, even in the extremity

of unpleasantness, do Chinese remain to the proprieties of etiquette. The day, however, gradually improved; for though winter lay hard upon the scene, and the snow was such as to make me feel like Isabella Knightley in my fever to get home over the hills before more should come and prevent me, yet the biting wind of yesterday was quite dead, and we ascended pleasantly in perfect winter calm. Along the crests there were the immense green cones of *Pinus Armandii* to collect. It became an adventure, plunging through the snow-beds from tree to tree, and snapping them off their hearty stems, the laden branches blowing powdered whiteness down all over one, as the juicy twigs broke away in a flaw and flurry of snow, till one was crystalline as Father Christmas, and one's hands bird-limed for days to come with the tenacious stickiness exuded by the cones. These were just on the nice point of ripeness, scale gaping from green scale, yet without having yet shed the plump and pleasant kernels.

Down into the glen of the pink spindle-tree we proceeded, the cook on the pony, while I discovered more and yet lovelier specimens of the spindle, tall gracious trees, weeping away in long showers of rose-pink fruit that had all the look of copious blossom.* At the back I mounted and rode up the long ascent of the much higher valley of the gold-washers till we attained the saddle and summit of the pass. Here the air was really nipping and steely with winter, under a nearing iron sky lowering with snow. On the crest I got more keys of the maple, now better ripened with these late frosts, and made myself so cold in the process that I must needs run headlong down the slopes of copse below, the cloudscape very grand and turbid in front of me, with glimpses of the

* F. 392.

Great Ridge above their rolling masses, indescribably magnificent and high in virgin snow, while in the depths away beneath one saw the Blackwater Valley, brown and green and shining and brilliant in the sun. Frost had now had its will of the shrubs, as its fashion is, and all the seeds were ripe and cracked. I had a busy bulging time as I went, with honeysuckles, Syringa, Deutzia, Forsythia, Abelia, Dipelta, and Acanthopanax. Down in the bowels of the gorge the darkness about the Well of Weeping Fairies was now illuminated with the golden flames of Celtis and lesser shrubbery, warmed with occasional flares of scarlet from the maples, while on the mossy ledges of the cliffs was now in blossom a charming small garlic with loose radiant heads of rosy pink. As we descended thence the Great Ridge opposite seemed to climb every moment higher and higher into the sky over the fells in front. Slowly it disentangled itself from a last fluff-roll of cloud, and away to the left floated into sight the wintry austerity of Thundercrown. Now it was a but little way to Nain Dzai. Already the atmosphere had wholly changed, and by the time we had settled into that delectable spot my lungs were expanding voluptuously with a warm velvety air that it was sheer balm to breathe after the stringent arctic agonies of the alpine winter up above.

The return to Siku was all pleasantness; the arid slopes and gravelly flanks of the downs were brilliant with the abundant golden globes and domes of the little tansy. But the consideration as to how we were going to collect this beauty, and all other considerations, too, were banished from our minds, when, having ridden up the streets of Siku, we were met in the Yamun with the news that two other foreigners were also now there, and likewise bent upon collecting plants! The coinci-

dence took our breath away. Such a thing to happen in so remote a tiny point of the world as Siku, where not two foreigners have appeared before from age's end to age's end! In a tempest of surprise, by no means wholly pleasurable, I ran over in my mind all other plant-collectors then reported to be at large in Central Asia. The feelings of one convulsionist missionary when another convulsionist missionary of a different heresy comes intruding on the scene of his own activities are but pale compared with the alarms of a botanical collector when a rival happens along his track. Who could these people be? What had brought them to Siku? What astounding and unthinkable freakishness of fortune has selected the one spot in Asia where botanists already were, for the introduction of two more? For some hours we beat our brains, and vainly sifted the chaff of Chinese gossip for some grain of sound information. It was not till next day that our ultimate conclusions were confirmed, and we found that this was indeed Mr. F. N. Meyer, travelling in search of economic products on behalf of the Agricultural Department of the American Government. With a coadjutor and a Chinese interpreter of high degree he had just arrived in Siku, on his way southward to collect certain nuts and peach-kernels that it was thought might be of use in creating some new and more resistant strains for America. Relieved thus of my anxiety that these newcomers might want to be my rivals in the affections of the alpine flora, I was able to meet them with all the joy the occasion warranted, and to take a first instalment of delight in Mr. Meyer's flow of conversation, before we left them to perfect their devices, and ourselves moved up on to the hills for the last ascent of Thundercrown.

The great mountain did us the farewell honour of a

ALLIUM CYANEUM MACROSTEMON.
"THE BLUEBELL GARLIC FLOUNDERED IN DELICATE FLUFFERIES OF BLUE"
(Page 163)

cloudless welcome, and in the brilliant heat cast aside its mantle of snow for the moment, pending the final descent of winter. It is thus, indeed, that the end of the year is always said to come in these ranges: first a snap of snow and winter in October, following on a period of gloom, and then a St. Martin's summer in November, during which the first snows vanish and the mountains stand clear till winter comes down at last, sudden, final, and immovable, at the end of the month. This false start, accordingly, is just what the seeds require to finish their ripening on the Alps, and it was with a rich harvest of everything we wanted, even to the precious Delphinium, that at length we returned to Siku, and found the whole place in a buzz of excitement. It was one of those cases which show how very easy it is to get into trouble in China, if luck and friendliness fail. Mr. Meyer, it proved, despite his many years of travel in China, maintained so rooted a repulsion for everything Chinese that he had successfully avoided any acquaintance even with the language, and accordingly, in visiting districts so remote as this, found himself under the necessity of bringing with him this highly-paid interpreter, a person of such grandeur and pretensions that we heard he was locally considered the Great Man of the party, and the two foreigners his attendants—no addition of prestige to the expedition.

Now, to bring these grand people up country is merely, as I said at the beginning, to court disaster. For danger and unpleasantness of any kind they have an insurmountable repugnance, and in wild districts and amid unknown dialects become merely an expensive hindrance. No sooner, then, had Mr. Meyer reached Siku and announced his intention of proceeding over the hills via Ga-Hoba to the south, along the road which we had

just traversed in perfect comfort and security, than the interpreter, finding Siku already sufficiently barbarous for his distaste, absolutely struck work, and declined to go another step towards those dangerous and ill-famed lands. "I will stay here," he consolingly said to his employer, "and take home your body when it is recovered."

This programme by no means appealed to Mr. Meyer, who had engaged the gentleman, not as an undertaker, but as the interpreter absolutely essential to his own ignorance of Chinese and Yamun ceremonial. Words flew high and higher, and soon the interpreter descended the stairs with more precipitance than he would have chosen, followed by the coolie, whose intervention in the blessed cause of peace procured him nothing better than a bloody nose. Instantly all the little town was a-hum with this scandal. Mild and just remonstrance though Mr. Meyer might consider it, in the eyes of Siku it took on the aspect of an outrage. And, in this case, it was the eyes of Siku that counted, for now Mr. Meyer, left servantless and solitary, was quite unable to procure any service for love or money from anybody in the place. The people of Siku are a dour and independent lot, in fact, by no means friendly to foreigners in any case; and it was only our participation in their storms, and the steady friendship of the Governors, that had enabled us to enter into the necessary relations of commerce, and maintain them with dint of unceasing observance and tact. Offend such folk or alarm them, and you are surrounded immediately by a sullen and invincible resistance that might at any moment blossom into more positive hostility. Money is of no use, for they have already all they want among themselves, and not the poorest coolie would affront public feeling by taking

service with someone whom public feeling has ostracised: to say nothing of thus setting aside the Secret Societies, which are the real ruling forces of such towns, to so great an extent that we were told how Lord Jang, when it became urgent to protect Siku against the White Wolf, could not get a single soldier together to defend the walls until he had had a humble colloquy with a certain very dingy old hanger-on of the Yamun, whom I had always taken for some low-class writing-man in decayed circumstances, but who in reality was the leader of the Elder Brother League in those parts, and a personage of such importance and power that within half a day he had collected Mr. Jang the garrison which would have been quite unprocurable without his good offices. With these forces against you, and the general feeling of the town as well—for there is nothing that turns the Chinese so mulish in resentfulness as rudeness or violence on the part of the foreigner—your lot is likely to be difficult in the wilds of Chinese travel. We ourselves, for instance, had had to be very careful in the dismissal of the coolie with the devoted dog-eyes, who had made off with, and eaten, a tin of putrid sardines which he was given to throw away; and accordingly had to "be shown 'is fault plain," yet not too plain, as his father was one of the most important Elder Brothers in Siku. Mr. Meyer accordingly, without these precautions, found himself in a state of helpless isolation in Siku, unable to get help of any kind, either for his immediate needs or for his prospected expedition over the hills.

It was at this point that our own friendly relations with Siku came in so handy. Had it not been for our presence, indeed, it is not easy to imagine how the American party could have extricated themselves from their present predicament—at least, without the

abandonment of their plans. There is no *non possumus* attitude so absolute as that of an unfriendly Chinese town, and with the interpreter declaiming his wrongs to all the city it was not likely that this attitude would soon relax. Nor, in one's relations with Chinese, are kindliness and a sense of common humanity such bad investments; as witness the cheerful devotion of our new little cook, for instance, a mere come-by-chance, raked in on the moment's need. Deny them a share in your interests, and they take none, as Mr. Meyer justly complained; offer them one, and they accept it with ardour and embrace it firmly. The present situation, however, demanded less philosophic treatment. We meditated lending him rifle or revolver for immediate needs, until we discovered that he already had both, loaded and ready to discharge at any moment on any provocation, this being the proper White Man attitude in respect to the "damned yellow scum." With the Yamun, though, we were able to supply his wants effectually.

For Great Lord Tung, not having received courtesies from these new-comers, preserved a non-committal attitude, and Mr. Meyer was as unable as unwilling to beard authority in the Yamun and put his case. Accordingly, on his moving appeal, we put ourselves at his disposal, and convoyed him duly round in state to where Great Lord Tung was standing amid the copious reparations with which he was setting to work on the crumbling mouldering old Yamun. The new Governor proved a careworn well-bred elderly gentleman, rather like a Charles the First who has learnt sense. In we went to his room, and the interview proceeded favourably, though impelled, by the impatience of Mr. Meyer, to a speed that violated every principle of Chinese

courtesy. Finally all ended well for the moment. Mafu, working on our good relations with the town, was able to get a man to undertake Mr. Meyer's conduct over the hills, and Lord Tung, on our explanations, furnished him with full facilities, and took steps to recover his forfeited excessive wage from the defaulting interpreter.

These things being thus satisfactorily settled, the Meyer expedition duly took its way over the hills towards Nan-Ping with every prospect of success. But either the caravan grew daunted by the terrors of Chago, exaggerated *ad libitum* in Siku gossip, or else some other accident prevented their ever getting there. Anyhow, Mr. Meyer had the great luck to find the very stones he wanted no farther away than Ga-Hoba; and thence in a very short time returned again to Siku on his way north to Lanchow, whither he again followed soon upon our arrival, and, I fear, experienced again the same difficulties in securing a staff for a proposed visit of exploration in the Da Tung Alps—a scheme so wild, fruitless, and impossible in the dead of winter that I could but wonder rather how it came ever to have been conceived than why it was so sensibly abandoned when the circumstances of the case became known.

This moral tale is told at length to illustrate the extreme advisability of cultivating good relations with the Chinese when you happen to be travelling in China. I lay further stress upon it, as I fancy it may have slipped from some people's memory. Meanwhile my own party broke up, and Purdom went hurrying northward to the Jo-ni Alps to see what our boys might have been doing all this time in the big range. For we had come south ostensibly for six weeks, and it was now a good two months that two of our retainers had been at work among the seeds of those far heights. It behoved one

of us to hurry up there in time to see what they had been doing, and make good any deficiencies there might prove to be in their harvest. So off went Purdom, and I remained behind for a week or so to accomplish various essential final gatherings about Siku. On the acropolis there were Asters to get, and Incarvillea, for instance, and more specimens of the lovely little parsley-leaved Clematis of the hot gravelly banks in these parts, that mounds itself into stiff-stemmed massive bushes of two feet high and four across, bedizened all over with multitudes of bright golden little half-pendulous Maltese crosses with a dark eye.*

Day by day I explored after seeds in gorge or fell-fold, till down would sink the soft radiant gloaming, and I was not at home before the solemn glamour of dusk was done, and the still warm world left placid in the flooding silver-grey light of the young moon. The night-frosts brought quick maturity now to the lowland seeds of Berberis and Indigofera, always slow and late and never ripening till late autumn has cracked the husk or flushed the fruit with its smart nip. Very lovely was now the tall big bush Berberid of Siku, which alone of its family loves only the hot arid corners of the Blackwater Valley, and luxuriates especially in the graveyard just outside the west gate on the torrid slope of the hill, where its dense thorny bushes of five foot high or so were so lavishly jewelled with bunches of bloomy oval berries that each became a mere mounded weeping fountain of pure scarlet. And when you have done with this, howling repeatedly in the chevaux-de-frise of the dreadful thorns that beset its arching sprays all along, there remains the Lovely Indigofera † to get in

* *C. nannophylla*, F. 321.—Alas, it is tender.

† F. 312.

ripe seed higher up the slope, or yet more early ripe on the bare loess shoulder below the conning-tower on the brow of the acropolis, where the great coffins are most copiously lodged up and down the acclivity. For now the gleaming little bright rosy flowers, that peered in pairs amid the contorted intricate masses of the wee-foliaged tight little bush of six inches, have for months been replaced by hanging narrow pods, which for long and long look ripe and never are, until one day at last you find them actually opening, and if you gather your harvest and lay it out on trays before the fire, will be kept awake for hours by the miniature bombardment of pistol-shots from the exploding valves, as in their drying they shoot their little black pellets out violently to every corner of the room.

After weeks of anxiety, then, as to whether I should ever find the Lovely Indigofera in ripe seed at last, it was with deep sighs of relief that I enjoyed my closing days in Siku, squattering about among the coffins and the ruins of the coffins, on the slope below the acropolis. True, the surroundings had a touch of the gruesome, and my trowel developed a morbid passion for slipping away down the hill and taking up its abode amid some grey wreckage of bones laid out in the shell of its casket; nor did the circumambient air allow me always to forget that the inhabitants of the larger newer coffins had not yet attained to such a stage of dissolution. But all these external touches only add point to the intense restful satisfaction of a seed-collector at work among seed of which he has despaired. I doubt if there be any sense of achievement so overwhelming in the world, certainly far beyond comparison with the mere frivolous frenzy of pleasure with which one happens on a flower.

CHAPTER XXI

THE END OF THE SEASON

In time for the thirtieth of October all was finished in Siku, and there was no longer any excuse for delay. I hated the thought of leaving, though, and made many pictures of how pleasant it might be to come here for one's declining years, far from the frets and fidgets of the West, and end one's days in the wide sunny yards of the Yamun, stealing one of the town's diamond rivulets to make pools and a garden. The early winter was hot and blazing over the valley, but the days were pressing on, and I began to detect symptoms that Mr. Pung was wanting my quarters to make a feast of welcome for the new Great Lord. So I announced my sad determination of departure, and was walking in the yard to digest it, when I suddenly became aware of clamours, and beheld horses and man and a huge red umbrella heaving through the outer gate It was Great Lord Tung coming in state to return my call. Conscious that there was nobody at hand to sustain me, not even the Mafu, I turned and bolted wildly round the corner into the long shooting alley where I have enjoyed so many happy hours of patrolling up and down in the grilling heat. But the Great Man's emissary tracked me down, and brought me his card. I lacked the brazen front to give that "Not at home" which Chinese etiquette admits more freely than even our own, and

returned with the best courage I could muster to play my part in the interview. This went off much better than I could have dared to hope, my stock of Chinese coming surprisingly well to my command. In solitary majesty I advanced to where the Governor sat still upon his horse at that highest threshold of the Yamun to which it is permitted to ride, assisted him into my quarters with bows, and conducted quite a successful cordial little chat before the Mafu returned, and allowed me to bring the visit to a conclusion by asking if all was ready for the day's proposed expedition.

Mr. Pung now in his turn expressed deep regret at my going, and sent me in a little framed paper screen, with requests that I should write him a farewell compliment on it, which I duly did, in the form of a sketch, with appropriate dedicatory verses. But I think my departure was timely, for on the very day of my going scarlet cushions were brought into the main room, and the scarlet lanterns hung, and scarlet canopies suspended everywhere, until my bare little yard had all the look of imminent festivities. Quite dimmed by this explosion of splendour, my dingy cavalcade at last slunk out almost unnoticed, and the long wait had largely substituted irritation for sentiment in my own bosom, and thus softened the wrench of parting. On the outermost threshold I had my last good-bye with Mr. Pung, and rode away out of Siku, sadder and sadder every moment to be leaving that lovely little sunny corner of contentment, sunk in rich greenery amid its fountains of cold clear diamond. As we rode down the long windings of the valley Thundercrown, like my own emotions, mounted higher and higher, and our progress was delayed by my frequent turnings back to take yet another farewell of the lonely splendid mountain that

by this time seemed an old friend, hard to win, indeed, in the beginning, yet well worth the toil in the end. There were no more seeds to get in the Blackwater region: that book was closed. It was with my usual distaste for fag-ends of finished jobs that, as I rode out beneath the south wall of Siku, I saw below me in that cottage garden how the big white Lily now towered in a candelabrum of noble urns full of seed; and with a tug of resolution mustered force to send down the Mafu to negotiate for them and secure them. On chances so frail of the collector's idle mood sometimes hang the sole prospect of a plant's introduction to the garden! It was in a glow of virtue that I stuffed my pockets with the pods that the Mafu soon came up and put into my hands with care, so full of seeds that these flew out on every side along the wind on their chaffy wings and were nothing regarded. I shudder even now to think how nearly that Lily escaped my net, gone slack in the conclusion of collecting.

The next chapter of the harvest began when we had turned the corner beyond Liang-Ja-Ba, and struck away north out of the Blackwater Valley into that of the Nan Hor, now no longer to be known, having declined from its former turbid volume into a mere clear little green runnel, flowing here and there amid vast naked stretches of shingle. So quickly do the rivers of these ranges feel the strangling grip of winter on the central highland of Asia. The first day's stage was a very long one this time, and all the hills were now perfectly bare and brown in the hard clear air, except where the little tansy studded the hot steeps with balls of gold like yellow hundreds and thousands peppered over the fells. It was sundown when at last we saw Kwan-ting ahead of us round its bay of flat fields, skirted by the heavy green

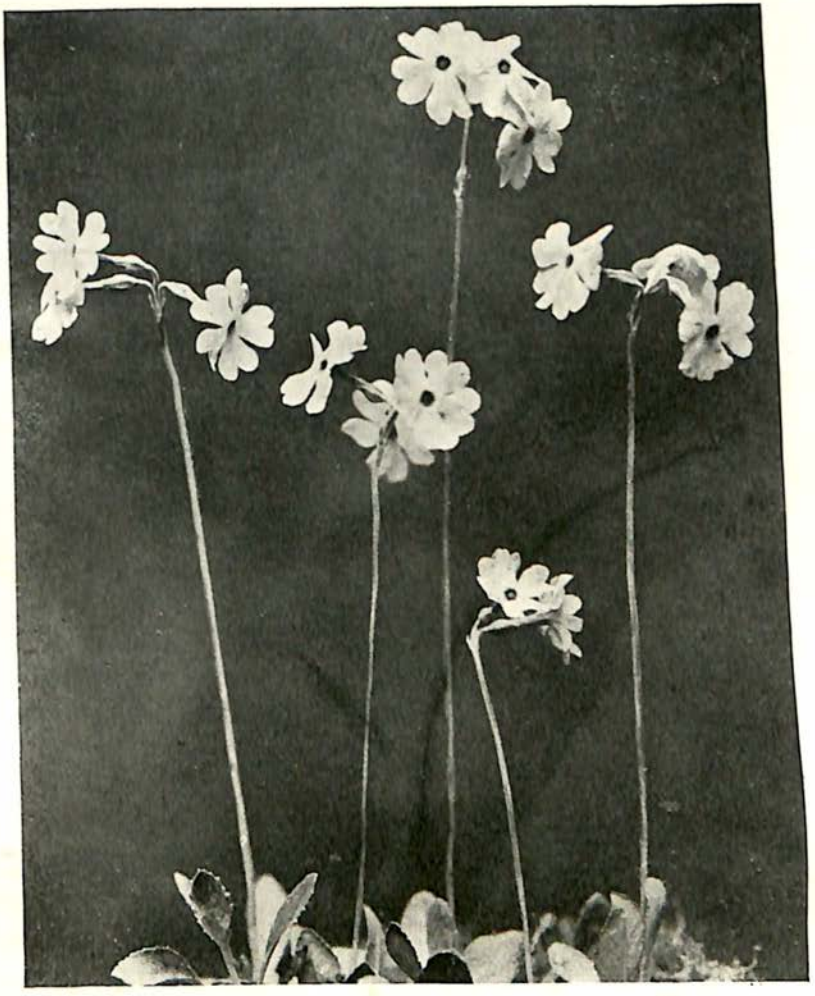
and golden glory of the grave-coppice all along, where the tree-honeysuckles were now a mass of ruby crimson berries under the filmy golden shade of the great old "Celtis" trees. In this glade I spent most of the next day very happily, the air being quiet and autumnal and sad, in keeping with the moribund hectic beauty of the scene. The "Celtis" drops its tiny nuts over the ground mercifully, otherwise it would be a problem to get them; as it was, we squatted along the soil beneath, and collected the wee dark pellets off the earth, having to take care to get none that had in their side the minute dark hole that shows they are weevilled and hopeless.

On the morrow we resumed the trail, and successfully negotiated the notorious difficult stretch along above the Nan Hor. For now the river was so meek and dwindled that the donkeys could paddle through its courses as they pleased. The horse and I pursued the track round the corrugated cliffs of loess above it, and found it more appalling than ever, when it shrinks to being about four inches wide, a mere sloping sagging scratch across the face of the mud precipices, coiling vertiginously down. My own feet went easily; the horse's four had to be carefully coaxed and cajoled. The cook and I alternately rode after this, as we advanced into the chief territory of the Weeping Buddleia, to meet a sky of intense violet darkness, the culmination of the late brewing weather. In the last ghostly gloaming of the gloom I alighted for seed of the Buddleia, and then down the valley came a blinding veil of dust-storm, heralding the bitter gale that now broke on us in blasts of icy wind, and soon developed into a lashing blasting fury of cold rain. Fortunately by this time the country had recovered the visit of the Wolf, and the villages were alive with business once more, and caravans busy

all up the road. Consequently we were able to give up our hopes of Tan Chang, and settle for the night into a small hamlet some three miles short of it. They met us, indeed, at first, with the "No room" cry which is the peasant's first frightened answer to the stranger; but there was no accepting this, as the streaming freezing deluges made further progress impossible in the black dark that had descended. Accordingly persuasion and patience soon, as usual, succeeded in opening all doors, and we were safe in comfort for the night.

Cold, indeed, was now the keynote of the weather, and I have never felt so frozen in my life as through the evening of the next day, when we were at last winding up in the early twilight along the weary bays that ascend to Karta-pu. For here the wind of dusk was an arctic agony, shrilling through one's very bones as it came keening down that interminable upland valley through the wicked wintry wolds on either hand. The wretched horses were so tired and chilled that they could scarcely move. Neither in walking nor riding was there any keeping the life in one's limbs; one huddled low into the philosophy of sheer persistence. I had dreaded especially as we came the bitterer gales yet that would be blowing across the plain of Karta-pu; but these proved less terrible than the draughts down the valley, and the welcome we received at the inn restored my circulation; though it was now dark dusk, with an hour or more to wait before the poor little donkeys came toddling up the street with neat patience, almost lifeless with the day's toil. I ordered all the party a good dose of hot Chinese wine to close the chapter, and hoped for better things on the morrow.

And so, indeed, it proved. It was icily cold, but faultlessly brilliant and cloudless. A fair was raging in



PRIMULA GEMMIFERA TYPICA. THE WELCOME PRIMULA

Karta-pu, as yesterday another had been raging in Tan Chang as we passed through. For a time I scanned it, and watched the hand-in-hand, sleeve-hidden bargaining that always goes on between the two parties to a deal, thus secretly tickling each other's palms with indications of what one will give and the other take, while the impassive faces above keep the outer world from suspecting the terms they are making. But at last it was time to be moving, and I rode out into the glorious day, the country clear as crystal, and the encircling downs now sere and Ligurian in the glistering frosty sunshine. From the topmost pass the southerly mountains gave me a glorious farewell, unfurled in the new virginity of winter. Fold over fold of soft and softer sapphires closed at last in wall above wall of tumbled snowy masses away along the horizon, with Thundercrown lonely and little and blue, very far out to the left beyond the break in the range. Balmy and delicious was the evening by this time, and in balmy delight I drifted slowly up the long flat stretches to Min-jô, and arrived at sundown upon the bare green plain below the city, now gilded in the slants of light over the ink-black hill overhead, with gentle wreaths of opal and soft sapphire rising from the lit Kangs of the villages, amid their willow-groves that sparkled with a yet more brilliant yellow in a thousand points amid the blue reek that rose in the gold-powdered air.

In Min-jô I avoided the mission and its hangers-on (the mission precinct in Min-jô is the second place in China where I have had things stolen*), and on the morrow determined to proceed as far as Nâlang. But on that morrow, what with one thing and another, it

* Though subsequently by research recovered, and this in the upheavals of the White Wolf time, with no proprietor in residence.

was late before we were ready, and no start was made till the sun was well advanced in his conquest of a filmed and bleary day. I doubted already our reaching Nâlang before dark. In uneventful peace we traversed the lengths of the stage, however, our way now often circumventing the wide sweeps of the bays by cutting along the very shores, and round under the projecting precipices above the Tao Hor. For by this time the heart of Tibet had been securely locked in winter, and the Tao Hor showed even more of a miraculous change than the Nan Hor. Seeing the huge turbid tide of mud that it is in summer, I had doubted the tale that the Tao could ever be beautiful. But now I found it shrunk to the loveliest water I have ever seen, as brilliantly clear and of as keen a blue-green as any tourmaline or emerald, rippling in a fantasy of colours between its rocky walls and the dark reefs that now everywhere broke its depths of green and sapphire crystal into white spray and flurries of diamond. Under the clear sky, between the browned dead hills, the river seemed almost living in its brilliance, and its rapids by the great bridge were now an indescribable miracle of opalescent beauty, pools and races and the smooth surface of the whirlpool now all a blend of peacock colours between the high sombre walls and promontories of rock.

But meanwhile the day was rapidly passing, and it was already the last moment of sunset before we came into sight of the Swiss village. This being so I concluded that we should surely stay there for the night, and on a hillock in the chill sundown I waited long before Mafu appeared in the distance with the donkeys. But when he arrived he persisted that we still had plenty of time to attain Nâlang. It was perfectly plain to me that we

should have no such thing, but I had been long enough in China to realise that a Chinese usually has some very good reason for any decision he may take, no matter how preposterous it may seem to someone who does not know all the circumstances. If one insists against a Chinese opinion one is pretty nearly certain to find that that opinion was right, and that one has incurred nothing but trouble and disaster by one's obstinacy. The undercurrents are so many in Chinese life, in fact, that you can never tell by what secret difficulties you are encompassed. Be sure that your "boy" will never tell you what they are, but be sure also that he knows them all himself, and makes your plans for you accordingly, to which it is your best wisdom to submit, however foolish they may seem to your own lack of enlightenment.

I therefore concluded that the Mafu had some sound grounds for believing, from something he may have heard at Min-jô or along the road, that it would be best for us not to ask the hospitality of Hsi ning Go. As he seemed quite fixed upon the point, I made no further protest, and the train proceeded, with the Mafu trotting on rapidly ahead on the pony, at my order, to secure us a welcome at Nâlang, where it was now quite plain we should not arrive till far into the night, as it was by this time verging on late twilight, and we had still a vague number of miles to go. The Swiss village, indeed, did seem in some excitement as we passed through. A scrimmage was proceeding in the street, and then we came on a crowded religious festivity, attended by most of the inhabitants, gathered round a monk who was pontificating with his bell in a little tent of blue and white, with another one confronting him. But hardly had we left the village than other matters claimed our attention, for now the dark was settled in, and it became

a matter of toilsomely picking one's way up and down the stony promontories that intervene between each bay of the river. More and more difficult grew the going in the blind and baffling obscurity. The night was filled with icy stillness. The river flowed in a trough of dense black between the hills, deep under the solemn star-lit sapphire overhead, which only made the blackness yet intenser in the valley, more especially when the moon came up far away and flooded the upper sky and the hilltops with ghastly pale luminosity. It was like advancing through a veil of black velvet. The cold held one in a calm vice, and the silence was overwhelming. To keep life in me, I got off and strode ahead along the flats of the river between the brakes of willow on either hand, notoriously the home of leopards. As I trudged on round bay after sweeping bay of the valley in the uncanny blank of the night I could not help wondering whether the leopards would eat me first or the cook, now following far behind with the horse. In the bottom of my heart I even discovered a willingness that they should begin with the cook.

Each headland after headland I thought must certainly reveal me Nâlang, twinkling with a hundred welcomes; round headland after headland I saw nothing but more sheer darkness, another stretch of impenetrable velvety gloom, unbroken by the slightest sign of life. Could we have missed the place in the dark because it was all asleep? But then, where was the Mafu, who would assuredly, having secured us house-room, have come out again on to the road to lead us to it? On I went, and on and on and on, gradually becoming a mere automaton under the crushing domination of the silence. At last, though, it was broken, far away, by the ghostly baying of dogs, and on the left, ahead of me,

I had a ghostly vision that might be walls. Down I sat on a hummock, accordingly, to await the cook. At last I heard the thud of the cantering pony along the distant flats, and above it the shrill carollings of the cook upraised to charm away the terrors and dangers of the dark, whether spiritual or temporal. Beside me he alighted, and chirped me fearsome tales of adventure by the way; before I mounted in my turn, and we proceeded on towards the now almost despaired of Nâlang. This village we were passing set Nâlang, indeed, yet many miles farther up the valley, for I could not remember how they stood in relation together, and knew of no village but Nâlang itself in this neighbourhood; yet this little dead place, grey and dim, away from the road, could by no possibility be Nâlang. For where was the Mafu to tell me, and where the lights to indicate that a wakeful host was expecting us? But this small hamlet was sunk in undisturbed slumber.

Accordingly we continued, and were just passing under its last outlying walls when I saw a point of light behind, and on the chance determined to ask where we were. It was lucky I did so. Question and answer soon settled the matter. We were in Nâlang itself. But even now our difficulties were not ended. Where still was the Mafu, and where our lodging? The householder whose vigils I had interrupted firmly denied the existence of either. There was no inn, no Mafu, no anything. We turned away, and wandered with ever-increasing helplessness up and down the labyrinth of pitch-dark sleeping streets and alleys, finding nothing, hearing nothing, seeing no sign of wakefulness. The poor little cook encompassed me with streams of cheerful talk, but was of no more help in the matter than I, having never been in these parts before, and being,

besides, as a Honanese, quite unintelligible in the borders of Tibet. I grew dazed with doubts and difficulties, more especially as by now all the dogs of the place were raising such a pandemonium that surely it must have called out the Mafu even from his final slumber had he been in the place at all. Yet still nobody stirred, and darkness enclosed me on every side.

I was rapidly approaching that stage of desperation at which women begin to cry and strong men leave off cursing, when in a side alley I came on two dim figures, and put my usual question. And one of them was a kind old man, who did know of Purdom's name and mine, and did know the inn, and now conducted us thither immediately through the tangle of the streets. When we got there it was no wonder if we had not recognised it before in our many passings, for it was as black and shuttered as all the other houses, and only long loud outcries at last aroused the Mafu from the inner room, where he had been enjoying bland slumbers in the assurance that the first he would hear of us would be the bells of the arriving donkeys, who knew the place well, being born and bred there with their owner. But as he had heard nothing of the deafening dogs it did not seem that he would have had much chance of hearing the donkeys' faint tinkle of bells. I gave him a selection from my views on the subject accordingly, and staggered through into the room provided for me.

The donkeys, of course, were very far behind by now, and very far behind, accordingly, our hopes of food and bedding. I ate scraps from the lunch-bag, and began to wonder about the faint and sickly smell that haunted the place. It grew so strong upon me at last that I emerged from my panelled parlour into the main kitchen, and made inquiries. Only to discover that an aged

grandmother, in the last extremities of dissolution, had just been cleared out of the room for my accommodation, and now lay groaning on the Kang in the kitchen. There seemed nothing to be done for the poor old soul, and in the meantime I judged best to remove my own quarters to the ante-room, for the smell of death is no good sauce for victuals when they come. And come they duly did, far sooner than I had expected. In the night I heard the remote jingle of bells, and there were the brave little donkeys picking their way in through the outer door. At once the no less heroic little cook went to work, and a dinner was there for me with the usual miraculous celerity of service in China, which, in the middle of nowhere, and with no facilities, will have you a fire burning and soup ready almost before you feel to have had time to turn round.

The whole party was thus promptly restored to warmth and serenity. I spent a merry evening playing with a tiny blue kitten amid a crowd of strapping merry boys and maidens of the inn, curious and smiling and blushing and delightful. Quite suddenly, indeed, comes the change from Chinese to Tibetan types, and from the first village in the vale of Min-jô you have a beauty show, in every hamlet and all along the road, of really pretty young women, buxom and well-featured and rosy, though inclining to a bunchiness of build that makes a very complete contrast to the mannered elegance of the Chinese women, mincing about on their crippled feet that arouse in so many right-minded people such repulsion, but in which I confess, myself, to finding quite extraordinary exotic charm. The Tibetans are free and bold in their gait and manner, stalwart striding great hussies of proper alpine type, and very much more to the heart of most Europeans than their Chinese

sisters, dainty and deliberate and constrained in all their looks and movements, pale with the civilisation of four thousand years. We are barbarians at heart, in fact; to the Englishman all refinements not his own are odious affectations, and the race whose women, to general applause, corset themselves into the revolting hour-glass shape of European fashions, in complete scorn of the disasters this entails on the future generations, feels itself entitled to cry shame on the far lesser mutilation, the far greater beauty, entailed by the foot-binding of the Chinese woman, whose children, at all events, do not suffer from a vulgar vanity, as do ours, no matter through what martyrdoms she herself may pass—a point on which opinions differ, missionaries having taken up foot-binding (though their own wives still wear stays), as a quasi-religious point, and consequently having enveloped it in all the atmosphere of prejudice that belongs to Christian dogma; so that one finds it impossible to attain truth; unless it be that the Chinese woman, at all events, whatever be the pain involved, continues to find it so much worth undergoing that she clings deliberately to the custom.

Not so much, indeed, of late days up on the borders, where you see many feet scantily bound, or not at all. This is a grim reminiscence of the last Mahomedan rebellion, when in the storm of lust and massacre the Chinese women of Kansu learned that it is as well to be able to run. As it was then they could but toddle away before their ravishers, on little hobbled pony-feet, with more than the terror of death in their hearts, until in the mere agony of despair they toppled at last and lay where they fell, cursing, perhaps, the ancient custom of the land, sprung from what ancient myth who can securely say? Some tell that it was a fox-

demon, in the guise of a lovely lady, who beguiled the affections of an early Emperor, yet could never disguise her cloven pads, which all the females of the nation duly set to imitating in consequence. Others refer the fashion to the club-foot of one of those beautiful baleful women who play so large a part in the history of China, twining the omnipotence of Emperors round their fingers like skeins of silk, to the undoing of kingdoms and peoples. Was it Wu the Empress, or was it the moth-eyebrowed Tai Chen, heroine of the most fearful love-tragedy in history, who had the little golden lilies that her lover and his Court imposed on his world for ever, before Court and Emperor and all went down in the disasters that her loveliness wrought on China ?

Or was it that yet more terrible wrecker of men, that woman of an earlier line, with the heart of a fiend and the face of an angel, so heavenly in her loveliness that, when at last she had brought her lover and his dynasty to shame and death, and was herself led out to meet her reward, the very executioner must needs be blinded lest he should dazzle in the blaze of her beauty and strike wide ? In any case that woman, whoever she was, entailed a new charm on her sex. We, in our admiration for small feet, are far from understanding what the full seduction of small feet can be. And the uncanny fascination of those crippled neat movements ends by growing so much more appealing than the cheap and obvious voluptuousness of a European woman wagging her waist at all beholders, that when one at last returns from the inlands of China, and a long course of Chinese women, compact tidy unobtrusive and dignified in their womanhood, their foreign cousins, flaunting in flimsinesses of which every detail is meant to emphasise their sexual appeal, have a vulgar and tawdry indecency

that makes our " civilisation " look more repulsive than ever, and more of a gross sham.

The next day's stage proved shorter than I had dared to hope, in a brilliant day as cold as hell and as clear as crystal. Through the silent deadness of winter we rode slowly on, and the Tao Hor was now so dwindled that we were able to achieve a great economy of toil by riding straight round the foot of the promontory to Bow-u-Go, instead of making the long ascent of the pass by the abbey of the silver fir-forest. Dry cold and extinct were all the hills, in tones of brown; but here and there on their upper slopes a willow-tree was now in such a fluff of silver seed that its effect in the sunlight was that of illuminated white almond in full blossom, glistering and shining in the voor russet flanks of the fell. At Bow-u-Go I found a cosy resting place in a little ground-floor parlour panelled in pitch-pine, where there awaited me bales of stores and the unwelcome excessive stimulant of home letters; but no Purdom.

Accordingly, in the interval between his return from the heights of Ardjeri, I took occasion to fall ill with the change from north to south, and lay placidly ailing for a few days until I judged that his arrival must be near at hand, so that I had best set about doing my own appointed task of ransacking the upper Mirgo valley for any odds and ends that might be over. However, when, after hours of riding up the turns of the glen, I did at last come into sight of the fell-fold which had led us to such loveliness in August, I felt much too ill to do any more, and sent the Go-go up instead; while I myself, having made my harvest of the chaffy Potentilla fluffs that had there yielded such a range of soft colours in August, lay idle and useless all the golden day on the brown lawn of that glade, among seedheads of the blue-

bell garlic, Edelweiss, and a very beautiful Swertia or Pleurogyne of all these parts, which makes plump little obelisks about six inches high, of large plump-lobed stars in the clearest pale water-blue. And there were also abundant blackened gaping pods of the common Iris of these valleys, in habit so like the tufted matted species of the loess that I had thought it one with them, not drawing other lights from the rare thin flowers of delicate lavender and white shades that were all we had seen in late July; and was correspondingly surprised to hear later that it had turned out a brand new species, now attributed to me as *Iris Farreri* (F. 414).

And after all my misplaced energies, that sent me back to bed on the morrow, it was not for some days yet that Purdom returned; though when he did so it was with so complete a harvest as made up for all ailments and delays. One felt one had a right to be tired; and the weariness of success is one of life's heavens, just as the weariness of failure is one of its worst hells. Perhaps there is nothing quite comparable to the intense and glorious fatigue that settles down on the successful seed-collector at the end of his season. All the year he has been working, undergoing an incessant course of diverse strains and anxieties, climbing for his flowers, travelling to far districts and back again for their pods. He has been on the go the whole time in arduous conditions, never resting, never able to rest even if circumstances allowed, harried like Io across the world, with the gad-flies of successive inquietudes as to his seeds and their stage of maturity; and tormented to supererogatory efforts by the awful feeling that the one rock or gully that he does not visit may prove against every probability to be the one place where a novelty is to be met, or capsules still lingering of some plant that everywhere

else has scattered its germs long since. And then in a rush, as the climax of the summer's stresses, comes the wild crisis of the autumn, whirling him to and fro like one of its leaves, leaving him no peace by day, and no quiet of soul neither by day nor night, in the culmination and final concentration of all his energies and anxieties.

And then, after the furious fitful fever, suddenly he sleeps well, and slack go all the limbs of his soul in the relaxation of that exquisite absolute fatigue that follows on achievement. The work is done, and big boxes of bulging packets surround him on every side; the last remembered treasure has been harvested, and, what is more difficult, even the last of the second-rate useful species has been swept into the net. With what rapture does he now let himself go flat, and savour the redoubled sweetness of all the bygone beauties of the summer, redoubled in sweetness by the fact that there they all now are, empacketed in envelopes and bags, infinite possibilities of beauty renewed in a far strange land for generations to come, at the price of toils and ardours that give yet added sweetness to their memories of the past, the realisation of the present, and the hopes of the future. It is a very good weariness, indeed, that follows on the close of such a year's good work as ours had been.

Clean and emptied now of anxieties and fidgets, I resigned myself to fate and winter in an ecstasy of prostration, and welcomed the suggestion that from Tao-jô I should proceed stately into the north, borne once more in a chair. In Jo-ni we made no protracted stay, and made off soon over the hills to New Tao-jô. The journey was cold and dull and very ugly, for the country immediately northward from Jo-ni is a huge openness of shallow rolling downs, cultivated in leisurely sweeps to their very summits, and now a desolation of brown

undulations, with a very remote view, from the high pass immediately over Tao-jô, of the whole tremendous line of the Min S'an behind us, in a crested arrested wave of whiteness across the horizon, forbidding and icy in the cold distance. New Tao-jô lies in a deep hollow, a long thin city far too small for its wall, that meanders high and far over the fells at the back. Though the White Wolf wrought nothing here approaching to the sack of Old Tao-jô over the hills, yet it was sufficiently saddening to stroll in the grey November day up and down the deserted streets, lined with the burned and blackened wreckage of the houses.

It was a saddening day, anyhow, of farewells and greyness of spirit to match the day—farewell to the mountains of South Kansu, and farewell to our year's work, and at Tao-jô farewell to the strapping son of China who had joined our caravan at Jo-ni, and proved the most indefatigably delightful of all our staff—a rose-cheeked Adonis in the flush of sapid youth, so stalwart and nobly built that I always suspected him of Tibetan blood, playful and curious and happy-tempered as a kitten, with something about his rocketing gaiety of heart, his easy and gentlemanly bonhomousness of outlook, that strangely recalled the *jeunesse dorée* of Balliol in those far days, for ever present, when "there were men in college." I could not then foretell that he would come north to join our adventures against next season. So it was with a real feeling of parting that I watched his stately blue-clad figure swinging out into the brown distances and dwindling to a speck. I could not even console myself much with the sight of the first and only Tibetan mastiff that I saw in all my travels here in a Chinese town. For though the big barking brutes of Tibetan and Chinese villages (for the most

part large compromises between Chow and Samoyede, and often very handsome fluffy creatures) had been even too much with us on our wanderings, never till this moment had I set eyes on the true Tibetan mastiff, a terrible thing like a huge bloodhound, black and shaggy with hanging jowl and bleary red-shot eyes that only wanted a touch of phosphorus to make a perfect Hound of the Baskervilles.

We evaded the Governor's polite invitation to dinner, and occupied the evening with negotiations for a chair. These proceeded in the unvarying Chinese fashion, and concluded characteristically. For, having decided that there was no chair, that there could not possibly be a chair, there in the morning, of course, the chair duly was. Into it, finally abandoning the horse, I mounted, pompously wrapped in the soft wool eiderdown which is another typical and almost more delightful invention of China. Gladly I was borne from sight of the bare brown terraces and shallow naked loess downs that fill the country between Jo-ni and Tao-jô. For now the country becomes at once more interesting, as you approach the last of the great mountain chains that die out of the Tibetan highland into the west of China. But the effort of the Kwen-lun has here come almost to expiring point. This barrier, parallel to that of the Min S'an and the Satanee Alps, is a mere potato-trench by comparison, with a bare eleven thousand feet for its two culminating points; and northward of this enfeebled outburst the heart of Asia sends out no more mountains to trouble the comfortable loess fells of Kansu, until at length you come to another alpine system that sweeps downwards from the far north in short isolated ranges, arranged almost as regularly as those of the Western Marches, but descending from

that northern arc of the Kwen-lun, girdling Tibet round the rim of the vast deserts where once stood the flourishing cities of Khotan.

You begin to enter the mountainous country quite soon after leaving Tao-jô, ascending a toilsome long pass towards huge fells that command a most glorious farewell view of the Min S'an across the south, right away to the famous Stone Gate by which the Tepos enter on their raids—an apparent little gap in the range between two precipices that are in reality some twelve miles apart, one behind the other. The fells themselves are curiously homelike in look, North-country moors on a vast scale of size and tumblement, with eruptions of limestone crags that are magnified scaurs, though here breaking up in more savage teeth from the crumpled brown face of the moor, which gives you lovely far-off prospects of ochre and russet and purple and violet in range beyond range of crag and fell, so different from the dull smooth fatness of the bald hills about Jo-ni, and carrying the feet of one's memory in an instant to the wolds of Whernside, though in themselves so much more large and fierce and wild.

From these heights others appear in the north, pinnacles and downs and folded ridges, and on the next day you make the traverse of the chain. Various ups and downs diversify the way, and hillside coppices, where a tall elegant Berberis weeps in long cascades of bloody tears; and then you toil arduously up the pass, and there overhead on your right from the col immediately appears the full splendour of Lotus Mountain, the culminating point of the range. Lotus Mountain is a shattered limestone mass of eleven thousand feet, aspiring in countless little spires and pinnacles into the naked blue, each one of which is crowned with a little

shrine, only to be attained by rock ladders and perilous chains of iron driven into the precipices. In late autumn the mountain has a very noble moment, for then all its skirts are filled with a round-headed surf of wintry willows in every shade of amber, orange, and crimson, descending in gigantic sweeps of splendour, from the dark chines under the crags where the fir-trees live, to the depths below the path where commoner deciduous woodland fills all the fell with a filmy haze of grey beneath.

Lien Hwa S'an* the Holy is not holy alone, but politically important, for it roughly marks off the southern boundary of that perilous part of Kansu which is principally inhabited by Mahomedans. From this point northward to within about two days of the capital Mahomedans bulk much too large in the population for the comfort of the Chinese or the ease of the Viceroy, and at Ho-jô, a day or so off the track, the Mahomedans have their own essential capital, where hardly a Chinese can venture, and where they are in easy reach of their fellow-workers in iniquity against China, the turbulent monks of Labrang. It was on Lotus Mountain, indeed, and on Monk Mountain, a few miles west, that the Mahomedan troops saved Lanchow from the Wolves by guarding the two passes into Kansu from the Tibetan March; but their loyalty was a rare and precarious mercy, how secured no foreigner can tell, and no straw to indicate the storm that is blowing up for China in Kansu as soon as the death of old Ma an Liang shall have released his armies and his chafing young bloods from the sworn truce that was to last for his lifetime; for meanwhile they are all accumulating strength and fury for a new Mahomedan rebellion that will follow on

* Misprinted "Sien" wha Shan in *Kew Bulletin*, No. 4, 1915.

LIEN HWA S'AN THE HOLY

his death, and swamp the reviving prosperity of the province in a fresh deluge of Chinese blood.

The troops had not averted one tragedy of those troublous times, a tiny point of horror hidden in the high combes of Lien Hwa S'an. For in a former expedition Purdom, venturing among the stark pinnacles of its innumerable summits, lost his footing in an iron ladder, and fell some fifteen feet on the rocks below, where he lay stunned and helpless. Now down below, in a grubby little cell, there lived a grubby little old Daoist nun at her devotions. Yet, for all her grubbiness and age, she had the root of the matter in her. Wandering up towards the peaks, she came upon this stranger lying senseless at their feet, and without more ado she saddled herself with the prone weight of muscle and bone, and crawled slowly down beneath her burden till she reached her cell in the distant gorge beneath. And here she tended her find, and revived him and nursed him, and sent him on his way at last rejoicing. So, at our passing that way again, Purdom would go, of course, to pay his respects to the anchoress. But the Wolves had had their way of the little old nun, and when Purdom reached her cell in its grassy glade amid the cliffs he found only a burnt and blackened circle on the sward, and in the midst a scatter of charred bones and a carbonised skull. The devotion of the nun had passed on to continue its good results elsewhere.

Little sign was there of such tragedies and storms on Lotus Mountain that clear winter day, with the flowing mantle of the willows sinking away beneath its skirts in waves of gold. From the crest of the pass we had a long and lovely traverse of the willow forest, following along the enormous bay of the mountain side, with depth on depth of woodland falling below us on the

left. The road was bad, though broad: a slough of stones and mud and melting mush of snow. It grew worse as we neared the distant shoulder, and began to wind down once more towards the valleys through forest, with glimpses of the Tao River gleaming in the sunshine still far away in the remote depths beneath. The way was now indeed atrocious, down sheer slides of ice, and round couloirs of bossy frozen mud. Down, down, down we dropped from the flanks of the mountain upon a neat little steading in a dell, embosked in big trees that were all tufted with a golden-berried mistletoe. Finally we attained the bed of some small confluent of the Tao, and found the hosts of the neat and charming Chinese inn greatly perturbed by the brutalities of our Mahomedan mulemen, a hearty jovial set of ruffians who were conveying our goods to Lanchow on a cheap rate for the opportunity of getting back into their own country; and incidentally, we believed, smuggling a load of butter or so into the capital under the flag of our caravan, which would assuredly cover them from the troubles and exactions of the Octroi. We composed matters with our presence, and spent the remainder of the peaceful sunny afternoon in peace.

The next day was beautiful, but very sad, with the Lien Hwa range sinking down into the distances behind, and nothing in front to take its place, only the dull rolling hills of China for ever and ever. Towards sunset we came on our old friend the Tao Hor again, sweeping backwards in the tremendous bend it takes so abruptly back to the north-east on leaving Min-jô, and now making up its mind to continue more or less directly north to the Hwang Hor. The Tao Hor is very different now from the Tao Hor of the wild Tibetan valleys, curve after curve in the narrows of the mountains. Here it is a large

and leisurely river flowing in a vast alluvial plain hedged in on either side, far away, by flat parallel lines of cliff, dust-coloured as the whole landscape, pale and pearly in the pitiless light of the northern winter, so shallow and white and transfiguring. It was, for all the world, exactly like a picture on the Nile—the far cliff-walls stretching out into opalescent infinity, the flat vale of the river, the ochre-coloured deadness of the whole scene, and the hills reduced to mere dead dun-coloured bluffs. One drifted along and along those empty stretches as in a dream; the journey was like a dead soul's progress through some huge and empty kingdom of the dead. I dined at Randalls diligently, and drove home afterwards with Elton and Emma; and never noticed the long distances through which we floated, till one day, lifting my eyes, I saw, away ahead up the valley, the cliff-like wall of Didao.

It seemed fairly near. I was yet to learn the wicked and whimsical humour of this town, even worse than that of Min-jô. For now, lo and behold, we have to leave the river, and go serpentining up and up in the loess precipices until we have come out upon a heaving loess plateau far above. Having undulated and twisted among its recesses for some time, one only at long last emerges to the brink again, with the city now right beneath your feet, towards which you serpentine once more, down among the promontories and pinnacles and projections of the vertiginous cliff. At the bottom you have the further trial of crossing the very gappy-planked bridge built of boats that is the only means of transit; and so I found myself at length in the thriving city of Didao, rejoicing in the crowded bustle of the streets, which was quite a refreshment to my soul, wearied by now of the country and the huge mountains now all

gone bare and void in death; and hungering, accordingly, for "a little quiet cheerfulness" *à la* Lady Russell. Thus in high feather I came into the wide yard of some composite tenement, and settled in under the smiles of a firm-fleshed and very comely lady of enormous size, ending in the tiniest bound feet imaginable, on which she went mincing stiffly on her businesses, looking like some huge blue pear walking about on the point of its stalk.

I felt quite as if I'd got to town after too long a rustification. But my mood was dashed to hear that Lanchow was still more than two days distant. Early the next morning off went the caravan, and a cart was promised for me, the chairmen having contracted only as far as Didao, and not feeling inclined to come any farther. In due time it arrived, a covered springless Pekingese cart, exactly such as the Queens and great ones of Europe went about in during the Middle Ages, though its covered arch is much shorter than the long arcade with three or four windows that you see in old illuminations, each with a crowned little head staring fair and square out of it, with an expression of beatified indifference not probable in the wearers if those carts were as springless as these, or those roads as mere a corrugation of ruts in a bouldered beck-bed. There is no chance for your bones up-country in a Peking cart, unless you get yourself so firmly cocooned in rolls of bedding that you can no more feel jolted than a pupa in its case; and even so there is no possibility of reading, so does the whole concern go wildly heaving, lumping, bumping, jumping over the stones and hollows of the way. None the less, I made myself very comfortable and serene, as off we went, boppety-bop, through the long hours of an especially long stage, traversing the country

uneventfully in a bumping dream. The day grew brilliant from its first cold pallors, and the wide flat vale between its level-topped wall of opaline scarps more than ever Nilotic in effect, pale and soft and clear. Sundown at last descended in lovely pearly films of dove-colour, but no sign of wall or city. Soon it was black night. We boppled sturdily onwards in the ruts, seeing still no sign of life, till suddenly a light ahead revealed the Go-go waiting to lead us into a little village, so crouching, black, and silent, that we should otherwise have passed it by as a mere emanation of the night, some wall or bank.

The next day we left the Tao Hor, saying good-bye to it for ever, and cut away across the angle to the right, up into a land of undistinguishable loess plains and bummocks and downs, perfectly barren and lifeless, uniformly dust-coloured, and as hideous as a slag-dump under the cold grey sky. It is hard to believe that these terrible loess regions of Northern Kansu can ever have had woodlands or life. Possibly they never did, though it is certain that at one time the now-ruined country must have been much better watered and wooded in general. Nowadays, thanks to the destruction of every twig for ages past, Northern Kansu is as desert as Sahara, bleak and torn and hopeless except in the flat vales of its starveling stony rivers, where the means of livelihood are scratched and scraped into existence. But the desert gains each year, the verdant flats of Lanchow are encircled as far as eye can see in wrinkled dust-yellow ranges of stark lifelessness; and in no long time the cities along the great North Road to Russia, Liang-jô, Su-jô, Kan-jô, Hami, Urumtchi, will be going the way of the lost civilisation of Khotan, swamped in the ocean of sand which is Central Asia.

Even the Koko-Nor is yearly shrinking, and the ruin of a world approaches visibly, unless some large and serious steps are taken promptly, such as have so miraculously saved and reclaimed the New Province, thanks to a Governor who planted so widely and well that within two generations the climate of that once imperilled land has perceptibly started changing for the better. But of all the ugly desolations of this northern loess-country, nothing can surpass in frightfulness this penultimate stretch into Lanchow from the south—unless it be the penultimate stretches into Lanchow from the north.

Towards the end of the day a beck-bed bumpily inducted us to the recesses of the hill-barrier that is the Official Mountain of Lanchow. Up the Gwan San goes the winding way, steep and winding, deep in the folds of the fell, naked and stony as a fossil bone, and its only sign of life the chaffy yellow fluffs of a sea-lavender, itself no more alive than some dyed grass on a lodging-house mantelpiece. The ascent was devious and long and difficult. Only at last did we find ourselves zigzagging up along a big down, and so to a high col, with ugly high views all round of snow-peppered barren fells, icy in the chill wind of sundown. On the north side the descent was abrupt and far, deep into folds of hills already indecipherable. Soon it was night; soon night was supreme in the ebony silence of the ravines. For hours we toiled and stumbled blindly at a foot's pace down the beck-bed, only faint snow-patches and gleaming rut-tracks showing us any way at all between the enveloping blurred blackness of the hillsides as they came and went soundlessly past us. A strange blank helplessness possesses one in such circumstances, a feeling of being translated into another world, where it is hopeless to think or stir for oneself.

No wonder the cart-man carolled shrilly against evil; his high persistent song seemed to cleave the darkness deliberately with its trilling wail. I found him and his song alike uncanny. For after awhile in China there comes on one not only a complete acclimatisation to Chinese faces (at first an ugly monotony, as ours at first to them), but also the oddest feeling of recognising all one's own best friends in the various Chinese one meets, till the country becomes a weird huge fancy-dress entertainment, where one is for ever meeting everybody one knows, only so slightly altered that recognition is immediate. And here was I in the very heart's heart of Asia, being conveyed through the darkness by nobody less than Mrs. Asquith herself in the thin disguise of a Chinese muleteer; and it seemed quite indecent that this gifted woman's twin or Asiatic substitute from the same mould of nature should persist in piercing the demoniac dark with a lance-like quavering screech, vacillating but unintermittent, such as I am sure not the utmost effort of malignant mendacity could tempt his European model to perpetrate. And still he sang and squealed and squalled; I appealed to him in vain by the name he bears* in Downing Street. And on we went winding down the blind black darkness of the glen, as it seemed for ever, till out of eternity appeared a twinkle of light, and there was faithful Go-go with his lantern come to meet us. Even now we had very far to go, on and on, down and down, till at length, just as hope was beginning to sink into a swoon of exhaustion, we were called up a side-road that we should certainly have otherwise missed, passed under a little arch, wandered in and out of the tortuous streets of Wa Gang Hsien (where they make a famous black glaze pottery for

* For the moment, alas! read "bore."

domestic use), and came to rest in a fine Szechuanese inn.

In point of actual travelling, the next day's road from Wa Gang Hsien down into Lanchow is the worst piece of the whole journey, abominable as are some of the earlier stages. It is practically nothing but boulders and stream-bed, while its lower reaches are dense in clouds of dust with the unceasing traffic. I was churned to a pummy in my cart, and Margot set himself to crooning till I could hardly bear it. The one thing that comforted me on the road were the little pale golden pears that were now everywhere on sale at the wayside, round as balls, thin skinned, with flesh of the most delicious sweet and melting juiciness, enhanced by a subtle taste of wild strawberries. As one approached Lanchow the streams of traffic grow every moment denser, with long strings of coal-carriers filling the dust-clouds with grime.

One has no notion of the capital as one draws near it. Down at the debouchure of the stream-valley you enter crowds and suburbs, turn a sharp corner to the right, and there suddenly, unexpectedly, you are in the full tide of Lanchow, with the broad bed of the Hwang Hor before you, and on the far side a wall of corrugated pale yellow downs as barren as those you have been traversing, but far higher. Why, then, was Lanchow once, in times almost prehistoric, called the Black Valley, the Kara Muren? Was it ever embedded in the darkness of forests, or did a few dirty shale-streaks on the hillsides earn it the name? In any case, Lanchow gives you the picture denied by Sian. For in the flat strip of plain where the great river flows between the high barren crumpled hills, the capital of the north lies outstretched amid levels of corn and long drifts of

orchard, so that in spring the huge old gate-towers rise from afar like islands in a surf of pink, and in summer peer amid enveloping volumes of green. On the pinnacles across the river perch temples and a poised pagoda far above, and a warren of lovely little shrines and hermitages cling like swallows' nests to the abrupt faces of the big rounded mountain on the other side, which flows away in enormous fells all dimpled with the million million grave mounds of four thousand years, to the orchard-stretches of the city itself.

So here, in Lanchow, in the first deadness of winter, ends the tale of my first season of collecting in China. It yet remains to be seen whether you, O reader *ex hypothesi* patient, will want to come with me up into the colder bleaker ranges of the north next year to hear a more peaceful story, to see different flowers, and to spend happy hours in Chebson Abbey and the Halls of Heaven. Meanwhile, ensconced in my wide house, with all my notebooks about me, I have to compile the history of the year's doings, rejoicing in the chance that afforded us so stately a dwelling-place, the forfeited residence of some Mahomedan leader detected in treason, who thereupon threw himself over the repulsive iron bridge across the Hwang Hor, which is the chief admiration of Lanchow's very rare foreigners, and the centre of every camera-pilgrimage: the real truth being, in fact, that he did nothing of the sort, but being too important a person to trouble, was given a hint, and disappeared happily down into his own estates down near Ho-jô.

Anyhow, his house was our opportunity, and soon grew full of the various pictures and bronzes that Lanchow produced, at rates considerably higher for qualities considerably poorer than those of Peking. But of all these things, and the pleasant fact that the

postmaster of Lanchow proved not only a European, but a man of European culture and reading, the tale belongs to that hypothetical next volume. The stormy year now closes with comparative peace over exhausted China, and the blackest storm over Europe. It is something to have flower-fields and beauties to remember amid the enveloping universal darkness of the world. For the utmost griefs of beings, races, and continents come and pass, but the beauty of a poppy-petal on an alpine fell, the child of a day at the mercy of wind or hail, that has its hour and passes also, continues immortally recurring through the ages, outliving the crash of kingdoms and civilisations, and their evanescent agonies. More and more deeply do flowers give consolation in the wreckage of life, and the heart of the gardener can never be wholly sad so long as the impregnable beauty of life goes on being born of the earth to which we all return. The sprouting little Crocus in spring is more king of eternity than the Kaisers; and the faith of a flower moves the mountains of the world. Observe the wisdom of Candide, then, and cultivate your gardens. For there alone will your own joys and muscles delve you distraction, while the dust-storm of mortal folly drives harmless down the road outside; and the ache of your own heart for the things you have lost from sight becomes anodyned and enlightened in the joy of your heart over those things that we all possess inviolable for ever.

APPENDIX

ITINERARIES

THE distances can only be given approximately, as the Chinese li is a very fluctuating quantity. Officially, 3 li go to about a mile; but the Chinese, with characteristic wisdom, estimate a journey by its ease or difficulty, rather than by its geographical length. Thus, 10 miles to them, if over a mountain, count as 20, and 20, if up an easy river-vale, are reckoned only as 10.

Where no meaning is given for a name, either it is Tibetan, or else the Chinese character has not been secured by the Mafu with sufficient correctness for a translation to be possible. The spelling here given is the misleading official romanisation:

Hsien	is	pronounced	Shen
Chow	,,	,,	Jô
Chen	,,	,,	Jun
Chia	,,	,,	Ja

And, in general, all letters hard in the romanised version, are soft in Chinese speech; *e.g.*, Tung is Dung, Pa is Ba, Kwan Gwan, and so forth, unless apostrophised, as P'u=Pu, Ch'uan=Chuan. And -ao rhymes to cow.

A Chen =a big village
A Pu =a small village.
A Hsien =a walled town, with a magistrate.
A Chow =a big walled town of higher rank.
A Kan =a yet more important one.
A Fu =a provincial capital, the seat of a Viceroy.

		LI
Mar.	9. Mien-chi Hsien to Kwan-yin Tang (Our Lady's Hall) -	60
,,	10. Miao Kou (Temple Ditch) - - - -	60
,,	11. Shan Chow - - - - - -	90
,,	12. Ling Pao Hsien (Divine-Jewel-borough) - -	50
,,	13. Pan Tou Chen (Plate Bean-wick) - -	80

		LI
Mar.	14. Hwa-yin Miao (Flower-Temple)	80
	(Here we enter upon the Plain of Shensi.)	
„	15. Chih Shui Chen (Red Waters-wick)	70
„	16. Lin T'ung Hsien	70
„	17. SIAN FU (City of Western Peace)	50
„	30. Hsien Yang Hsien	60
„	31. Tung fu-Fêng (Bending to the Wind, East)	70
April	1. Heng li Chen (Success-and-profit-wick)	70
„	2. Hsi fu-Fêng (Bending to the Wind, West)	50
„	3. K'i S'an Hsien	70
„	4. Feng Hsiang (Soaring Phœnix)	60
	(From about this point onwards, mules, bearers and ponies are the only means of transit.)	
„	5. Han Yang Hsien (South-Han-borough)	70
„	6. Lung Chow	100
„	7. Hsien i kwan (" Wherever you turn, profit ")	45
„	8. Ch'ang Niang-i (Eternal Peace Post)	70
„	9. Ch'ing Shui Chen (Clear Waters-wick)	100
„	10. Yü Tang Chen (Jade Hall-wick)	80
„	11. TSIN CHOW	70
„	13. Hsin Chia Tien (New Family Inn)	70
„	14. Chow Li-Tien	60
„	15. Hsi Ho Hsien (Peace-borough)	60
„	16. Shih Chia Kwan (Shih Family Gate)	70
„	17. Hsiao Chuang Tzu (Small Spring)	80
„	18. P'ing Lu Tien (Peaceful Road)	90
„	19. Fu erh Chieh (Street of Happy Sons)	80
„	20. Yao p'u (Medicine Shop)	70
„	21. KIAI CHOW	60
„	25. Kwei Chia Wan (Kuei Family Tent)	30
	[Liang Chia Pa (Liang Family Dyke), half stage.]	
„	26. Tao Chia Tsun (Opening of Peach-bloom)	100
„	27. Lao Yëh Miao (Temple of the Spirit of the People)	70
„	28. Wen Hsien	
May	3. Tung yü Kou (East Jade Mouth)	40
„	4. Chung Tsai Chen	70
„	5. Ti Erh K'an (Second Look)	70
„	6. Chago Ling (" High Tea Hill ")	90
„	8. Ga-Hoba (Ga River Dyke)	60

			Li
May	13.	Sha-Tan yü ("Satanee") - - - -	30
„	21.	[Ga-Hoba, back to Satanee] Nan yü Chai (South of the Ravine) - -	80
„	22.	SIKU HSIEN (Western Strength) - - -	20
July	6.	Siku to Nan yü Chai ("Nain dzai") - - -	20
„	7.	Kwan Ting (Official House) - - - -	60
„	8.	Tan Chang (Charcoal Place) - - - -	70
„	9.	Ka-ta-pu - - - - - -	80
„	10.	MINCHOW - - - - - -	80
„	11.	Na Lang - - - - - -	80
„	12.	Cho-ni - - - - - -	90
„	28.	Chiappa - - - - - -	75
„	29.	Archüeh (Ardjeri) - - - - -	70
Aug.	3.	Camp - - - - - -	60
„	10.	Gîte - - - - - - -	30
		[Back to Siku, Ga-hoba, and Satanee; then, back to Cho-ni.]	
Nov.	13.	Cho-ni to Hsin Tao-Chow - - - -	60
„	14.	Yang-s'a - - - - - -	80
„	15.	Chu ku Ch'uan - - - - -	70
„	16.	Hung Tao-i (Peach Blossoms) - - -	80
„	17.	Ti Tao (Autumn Peaches) - - - -	50
		(A cart now becomes possible again, for the first time since leaving Feng Hsiang.)	
„	18.	Sha Li - - - - - -	90
„	19.	Wa Kang Hsien (Earthen Kang-town) - -	100
„	20.	LANCHOW-FU - - - - -	45

EXPLICIT ANNUS MIRABILIS,
November 20, 1914.

BOTANICAL APPENDIX

(DETERMINATIONS MAINLY BY THE STAFF OF THE ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN, EDINBURGH)

PLANTS (THE MORE IMPORTANT ONLY) BROUGHT INTO CULTIVATION

Species hitherto known to science alone as dried specimens, now for the first time introduced to cultivation by this expedition, are in SMALL CAPITALS. Where the species is still undetermined, its degree of novelty is of course uncertain.

Species altogether new, alike in science and in cultivation, are in **heavy type.**

Abelia biflora (F. 101).
Acanthopanax quinquefolia (F. 394).
Acanthopanax trifolia (F. 395).
Acer, sp. (F. 349).
Acer, sp. (F. 348).
Acer, sp. (F. 351).
Adenophora, sp. (F. 235).
Adenophora, sp. (F. 354).
ALLIUM CYANEUM MACROSTEMON, the Bluebell Garlic (F. 222).
Allium, sp. (F. 305), pale blue.
Allium Purdomii, sp. *nova* (F. 321a), dark blue.
Allium, sp. (F. 165), purple.
Allium, sp. (F. 258), yellow.
Amphicome, sp. (F. 34).
Amphiraphis albescens (F. 146).
ANDROSACE LONGIFOLIA (F. 94).
Androsace chamæjasme (F. 142).
ANDROSACE MUCRONIFOLIA (F. 319).
Androsace tibetica (F. 247).
Androsace tapete (F. 128).
Anemone japonica kansuensis (F. 436).
Anemone narcissiflora, var. Thundercrown (F. 91).
Aquilegia ecalcarata (F. 280).

Arisæma, sp. (F. 283).
Arisæma, sp. (F. 420).
Aruncus, sp.
Aster Farreri (F. 174), sp. *nova*, Big Bear.
Aster kansuensis (F. 131, and possibly F. 226), sp. *nova*, Little Bear.
Aster oreophilus (F. 156).
Aster hispidus (F. 290).
Aster limitaneus (F. 173), sp. *nova*, Middle Bear.
Aster sikuensis (F. 456), sp. *nova*.
Aster Thunbergi (F. 246).
Aster, sp. (F. 455).
Aster, sp. (F. 458).
Astilbe Davidi (?) (F. 385, and perhaps F. 384).

Bauhinia Faberi (F. 134).
Berberis, sp. (F. 80).
Berberis, sp. (F. 355).
Berberis, sp. (F. 356).
Berberis, sp. (F. 357).
Berberis, sp. (F. 358).
Berberis, sp. (F. 359).
Berberis, sp. (F. 360).
Berberis, sp. (F. 361).
} Still undetermined, so that no certain claim of novelty can be made for any flowering spp., only for F. 80.

Betula Bhojpattra (F. 298), the Red Birch.
Betula alba (?) (F. 333.)
Betula, sp. (F. 470, perhaps=F. 333).
Bœa hygrometrica (F. 261).
BUDDLEIA ALTERNIFOLIA (F. 100), the Weeping Buddleia.
Buddleia Farreri (F. 44), sp. *nova*, the Grey Flannel Buddleia.
Buddleia Purdomii (F. 14), sp. *nova* (not introduced).
Buddleia variabilis, var. Nan Hor (F. 424), the Variable Buddleia.

Callianthemum Farreri (F. 73), sp. *nova*.
Caryopteris, sp. (F. 350).
Cimicifuga, sp. (F. 445).
Clematis æthusifolia (F. 301).
Clematis, sp. *atragenoid* (F. 315).
Clematis Fargesii (F. 211).
Clematis montana (?) (F. 344).
CLEMATIS NANNOPHYLLA (F. 321).
Clematis orientalis tangutica obtusiuscula (F. 307, 342), the Golden Bell.

CONVOLVULUS TRAGACANTHŒIDES (F. 99).
Corydalis, sp. (F. 113).
Corydalis curviflora (F. 37).
Corydalis, melanochlora (F. 254).
Corydalis, sp. (F. 418).
Cotoneaster, sp. (F. 111, 402a), C. Dielsiana (?).
Cotoneaster Dammeri radicans (F. 148).
Cotoneaster, sp. (F. 401a).
Cotoneaster, sp. (F. 401b).
Cotoneaster, sp. (F. 402b).
Cotoneaster, sp. (F. 403).
Cotoneaster, sp. (F. 404).
Cotoneaster, sp. (405a).
} undetermined.
Cratægus crenulata (F. 318, 329), the Blood Hawthorn.
Cremanthodium, sp. (F. 10).
Cremanthodium, sp. (F. 212).
Cypripedium Bardolphianum (F. 139).
Cypripedium Farreri (F. 155), sp. *nova*.
Cypripedium luteum (F. 138), Proud Margaret.
Cypripedium, sp. (F. 58), (?) C. Franchetii.
Cypripedium tibeticum (?) (F. 85).

Daphne, sp. (? D. tangutica) (F. 11).
DAPHNE, sp. (F. 271).
Daphne, sp. (F. 378) (perhaps=F. 271).
DELPHINIUM, sp. (? D. tanguticum) (F. 253).
Deutzia, sp. (F. 109).
Dianthus squarrosus (F. 389).
Dicranostigma Franchetianum (F. 1).
Diospyros, sp. (F. 425), the Lesser Persimmon.
Dipelta elegans (F. 18).
Dipelta floribunda (F. 157).
Diphylleia, sp. (F. 284).
DISPORUM PULLUM (F. 60).
Dracocephalum, sp. (F. 491).
Dracocephalum, sp. (F. 180).

Euonymus, spp. undetermined, (FF. 297, 289, 307, 308, 390, 391, 392, 447).
Exochorda racemosa Wilsonii (F. 95).

Farreria pretiosa, F. 19a, Novum genus.
Forsythia, sp. (F. 388).
Fraxinus, sp. (F. 314).

Gentiana, sp. (F. 25).
GENTIANA HEXAPHYLLA (F. 217).
Gentiana Przewalskyi (F. 303).
Gentiana, sp. (F. 220).
Gentiana, sp. (F. 332 and F. 217a=G. Farreri, sp. *nova*, F. 807).
Gentiana, sp. (F. 442).
Gentiana, sp. (F. 443), sent as *G. Gogoi*.
GERANIUM PYLZOWIANUM (F. 170).
Geranium (?) Pylzowianum, *var.* alpinum (F. 201).

Hedysarum multijugum (F. 103).

Ilex Pernyi (F. 16).
Incarvillea grandiflora (F. 89).

Incarvillea, sp. *nova*, yellow (F. 97).
Incarvillea, sp. (F. 268), probably=F. 289.
Indigofera, sp. (F. 266).
Indigofera, sp. (F. 312), the Lovely Indigofera.
Indigofera, spp. undetermined (FF. 105, 452, 453, 454).
Iris ensata (F. 29. Collected in better form, 1915, F. 496).
Iris Farreri (F. 414), sp. *nova*.
Iris goniocarpa (F. 124, 90).
Iris Henryi.
Iris, sp. (F. 177).
Iris, sp. (F. 276), Maræa.
Iris, sp. (F. 413).
Iris tectorum (F. 19).
Isopyrum Farreri (F. 96).

Jasminum, sp. (F. 383).
Jasminum floridum (F. 433).
Lagotis ramalana (F. 125).
Leontopodium alpinum var. (F. 219).
Leontopodium alpinum var. (F. 390, 410).
Leptodermis oblonga (F. 259).
Leptodermis virgata (F. 260).
LILIUM, sp. (F. 183), the Marble Martagon.
Lilium tenuifolium, the Slender-leaved Lily.
Lilium, sp. (F. 316) (? L. " Brownii " kansuense).
Lloydia alpina var. (F. 87, 527), the Fairy Bell.
Lonicera Farreri (F. 46), sp. *nova*.
Lonicera syringantha (F. 189), the Lilac Honeysuckle.

Lonicera, spp. undetermined (FF. 249, 250, 252, 224 [and 270], 277, 278, 313, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 379, 380).
Lychnis, sp. (F. 265).

Meconopsis integrifolia (F. 92), the Lampshade Poppy.
Meconopsis lepida (F. 123), the Dainty Poppy.
Meconopsis Prattii (F. 136), the Celestial Poppy.
Meconopsis Psilonomma (F. 255), sp. *nova*, the Lonely Poppy.
Meconopsis punicea (F. 175), the Blood Poppy.
Meconopsis quintuplinervia (F. 118), the Harebell Poppy.
(?) *Morina*, sp. (F. 215).

Myosotis, sp. (F. 245).
Nitraria Schoberi (F. 98).

Onosma, sp. (F. 3).
Ophiopogon kansuensis (F. 302).
Oreocharis Henryana (F. 262).
Osteomeles (?) *anthyllidifolia* (F. 408).

Pœonia Moutan (F. 8).
Pœonia, sp. (? P. Beresowskyi) (F. 67).
Philadelphus, sp. (F. 369).
Philadelphus, sp. (F. 370).
Physalis Alkekengi (F. 429).
Pinus Armandii (F. 341).
Pleione Roylei var. (F. 4).
Polemonium cœruleum tanguticum (F. 141).
Polygonatum, sp. (F. 274).
Potentilla davurica—fruticosa—Veitchii (F. 188, 460).
POTENTILLA BIFLORA (F. 214).
Primula alsophila, sp. *nova* (F. 178), our Little Lady of the Grove.
Primula ærinantha, sp. *nova* (F. 273).
Primula citrina (F. 133), the Citron Primula.
Primula conspersa (F. 187).
Primula gemmifera (F. 121), the Welcome Primula.
Primula hylophila, sp. *nova* (F. 38), the Wood-nymph.
Primula (?) *lichiangensis* (F. 86).
PRIMULA (?) LOCZII (F. 40).
Primula Maximowiczii (F. 191), the Red Hyacinth.
Primula optata, sp. *nova* (F. 122 and F. 248, in part), the Oread.
Primula Purdomii (F. 192).
Primula, sp. Purdomii form, but pale yellow (F. 193).
Primula riparia, sp. *nova* (F. 33), the Bankside Primula.
Primula septemloba (F. 192).

Primula scopulorum, sp. *nova* (F. 39), the Rock-nymph.
Primula Silvia, sp. *nova* (F. 61 and ? F. 197).
Primula stenocalyx (F. 195).
Primula tangutica (F. 194).
Primula viola-grandis, sp. *nova* (F. 74), the Grand Violet.
Primula Woodwardii (F. 116), the Imperial Primula.
Primula, sp. (F. 300).
Prinsepia uniflora (F. 272).
Pyrus, sp. (F. 338).
Pyrus, sp. (F. 397).
Pyrus, sp. (F. 389).
Pyrus, sp. (F. 400).

Rhododendron, sp. (F. 63).
Rhododendron præclarum, sp. *nova* (F. 88).
Rhododendron, sp. (F. 119).
Rhododendron, sp. (F. 79).
Rhododendron, sp. (F. 387).
Rodgersia æsculifolia (F. 132).
Rosa, sp. (F. 84).
Rosa, sp. (F. 291).
Rosa Banksiæ (F. 407).
Rosa, sp. (F. 463).

Salvia, sp. (F. 169).
Salvia, sp. (F. 227).
Sambucus, sp. (F. 337).
Saxifraga, sp. (F. 73), the Silver Saxifrage.
Saxifraga, sp. (F. 200), the Golden Saxifrage.
Sophora viciifolia (F. 9).
Spiræa, sp. (F. 457).
Spiræa, sp. (F. 459).
Statice, sp. (F. 434).
(?) *Stellera*, sp. (F. 93).
Syringa, sp. (F. 330).
Syringa velutina (F. 309).

Tilia, sp. (F. 393).

VIBURNUM FRAGRANS (F. 13).
Viburnum, sp. undetermined (FF. 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368).
Vicia unijuga (F. 184).

Wikströmia, sp. (F. 112).

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